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WINNING HIS GAME

By Ralph Henry Barbour

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D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, Publishers, New York

WINNING HIS GAME

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF "RIVALS FOR THE TEAM," "THE PURPLE PENNANT," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
WALT LOUDERBACK

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WINNING HIS GAME

CHAPTER I

DUD WONDERS

JIMMY LOGAN stood his skis in the corner behind the door and, tramping heavily to get the clinging snow from his shoes, climbed the first flight in Trow Hall slowly and then dragged wearied feet down the corridor to Number 19. Once inside the room, he said, "Hello," shied his cap onto his bed and sank exhaustedly in the nearest chair, stretching his legs across the rug and slumping down until the wet collar of his mackinaw came in contact with his ears. Whereupon he muttered, "Ugh!" and sat up another inch or two.

Across the room, one foot on the floor and the other doubled up beneath him on the windowseat, was Jimmy's roommate. His response to the greeting had been brief and delivered in a preoccupied voice, for Dudley Baker had a book open before him on the cushion and held a stained and battered baseball in his right hand. His attention was

divided between book and ball and had no room for Jimmy. The latter's gaze presently came away from his shoes, which were trickling water to the rug, and fixed itself on Dudley. He had to sit up still higher in the chair to get an uninterrupted view of his chum, which proceeding elicited a protesting groan from him, and after he had attained it he instantly decided that it was not worth while and deeply regretted the exertion it had caused him. He promptly descended again on his spine, crossed his feet and sighed luxuriously.

The dollar clock on Dudley's chiffonier ticked briskly and loudly in the ensuing silence. Outside the windows tiny flakes of snow were falling. The shadows deepened in the room. In the corridor deliberate footsteps sounded and suddenly the transom over the door showed yellow and an oblong of light appeared on the ceiling. Mr. Crump, the school janitor, was lighting the dormitories. Jimmy wished that his shoes were off, and his mackinaw, and the woolen socks, but as yet he wasn't equal to the task. When Mr. Crump's footsteps had died away on the stairs Jimmy broke the silence.

"What're you doing?" he asked uninterestedly. There was, however, no reply from the window-seat, possibly because Jimmy's tones had been too faint to reach there. After a moment Jimmy turned his head and stared across a pile of books on the

study table at the three or four inches of Dudley's head that were visible. Then:

"Dud!" he bawled resentfully.

"Huh?"

"What are you doing, I asked you."

"Oh, me? Oh, just trying to dope out some of this stuff."

"What stuff?"

"Stuff about pitching. How to hold the ball, you know."

"Oh!" Jimmy subsided again and another period of silence followed. Then:

"You don't expect to play baseball for a while, do you?" he asked lazily. "You'd better study how to throw a snowball!" He chuckled faintly at his joke.

"It isn't so long now," responded Dud soberly. "They're going to call candidates the twenty-first."

"Gym work," grunted the other. "Take my advice and keep away from it. Don't go out for the team until it gets out of doors. Are you still thinking of trying for the school?"

"Of course."

Jimmy grunted. "You'll have a fine show, I don't think! Better try for the second, Dud."

"I don't expect to make it, but it's good practice, and maybe next year——"

"You'll stand more chance with the second, and

have a lot more fun. The second's going to have a regular schedule this year; five or six games, maybe; going away for some of them, too."

"If I don't make the first, and I suppose I won't, of course, I'll try for the second," said Dud. "I asked Murtha this morning if he thought it would be all right to try for the first, and he said——"

"Guy Murtha said, 'Yes, indeed, Baker, we want all the candidates we can get!' That's what they always tell you, and then, when you get out there, they inform you gently but firmly that you won't do, and hadn't you better stay with your class team this year and try again next? What's the use? I like to play ball, Dud, but you don't catch me putting in a month's grind in the cage and then getting the G. B. as soon as we get outdoors. Me for the second—and safety."

"You're lazy," replied Dud, shutting his book and stowing the ball back of the pillows. "You could make the first this spring if you'd try for it. You ought to, too."

Jimmy shrugged. "Maybe so. But I'd rather have a sure place on the second, thanks. Gee, but I'm tired!"

"Skiing?"

"Yes; Pete Gordon and Kelly and Gus and I. We climbed up to the Observatory and then hiked

half-way over to the Falls. It was piles of fun going down the mountain. Gus Weston took a header and turned over about forty-eleven times and then went into a snow bank head-first up to his waist. But we tried to do too much. My legs feel as if they'd never stop aching! What have you been doing? Been in here all the afternoon? But, of course, you have. I forgot about your tooth. How is it? Any better?"

"Yes. I guess I caught a little cold in it. I wish that dentist chap would yank it out instead of practicing on it!" Dud turned the lights on and perched himself across a chair at the opposite side of the table, his arms on the back, and observed Jimmy in a thoughtful fashion. Jimmy grunted.

"Shoot," he said. "What's on your mind?"

"I—I've been wondering, Jimmy."

"Oh, gee!" Jimmy groaned deeply. "At it again, eh? Well, what is it this time, Dud? The other day you were worrying yourself thin because you were afraid you were costing your folks too much money, or something."

Dud smiled. "Not exactly worrying," he replied. "Just—just wondering."

"There isn't much difference, the way you do it. If I——"

"Not so much about how much I was costing them as whether they're going to get their money's

worth, Jimmy. Sometimes I wonder whether I'm really doing any good here. Now you look at it this way——"

"I won't! I refuse! Besides, that's an old one. What's your latest worry?"

"It isn't a worry—exactly. I was only thinking that——" He paused. Then: "Oh, I guess it isn't anything, after all. Say, you'd better get out of those wet things, Jimmy."

"I'm going to just as soon as I have strength to move. But I want to hear your new—er—problem, Dud. Come across. 'Fess up to your Uncle Jimmy."

Dud hesitated, smiling a bit embarrassedly. He was a good-looking chap of fifteen, with clean-cut features, a rather fair complexion and very bright blue eyes. He was small-boned and slim, and, since he had been doing a lot of growing the past twelve months, he looked a trifle "weedy." In that respect he was a distinct contrast to his roommate, for James Townsend Logan was a stocky lad, wide of shoulder and broad of chest. Jimmy was sixteen, although only four months divided the two boys in age. Jimmy's features were nondescript, but the result was pleasing. He wore his red-brown hair rather long—Dud said it was because he was too lazy to have it cut oftener than once every term—and had a short nose and a wide, humorous mouth and a very

square chin. He was a member of the upper middle class, while Dud was a lower middler.

"I guess it's sort of silly," said Dud after a moment. "But I've been wondering"—Jimmy groaned again—"why I don't know more fellows, Jimmy, why I don't—don't 'mix' better. I don't believe I really care a whole lot——" He paused again. "Yes I do, too, though. I'd like to have fellows like me, Jimmy, as they do you, and ask me to do things and go places and—and all that. Of course, I know the trouble's with me, all right, but—but what is it?"

"Oh, piffle, Dud! Fellows *do* like you."

"Yes, about the way they like the steps in front of School Hall. That is, they don't exactly *like* me; they just—just don't *dislike* me. I guess I'd rather have them do that than not care a fig whether I'm alive or dead. I suppose this sounds silly, but——"

"Honest confession is good for the soul," responded Jimmy lightly. "But I think you're wrong about it, Dud. Or, anyway—now look here——"

"I suppose I'm just not cut out to be what you might call popular," interrupted Dud thoughtfully. "Well, but still——"

"Shut up and let me talk! The trouble with you is that you don't let fellows find out whether they can like you or not. You don't—don't 'mix'—do you see? If you'd get into things more——"

"But that's just it! How can I when I see that I'm not wanted?"

"That's just imagination, Dud. You can't expect fellows to fall all over themselves and hug you! You've got to show 'em that you're ready to be friends. You've got to make the start yourself. What do you do when someone says 'Let's do this or that'? You mutter something about having to dig Latin or math and sneak off. Fellows naturally think you don't want to do the things they do. Now today, for instance——"

"I couldn't have gone, Jimmy, with this plaguey toothache!"

"Why, no, I guess you couldn't. But, thunderation, Dud, if it isn't a toothache it's something else. You've always got some perfectly wonderful excuse for beating it about the time the fun begins. Not that you missed much this afternoon, for you didn't, barring a lot of tired muscles, but you often do miss things. To be what you call a 'mixer,' Dud, you've got to 'mix,' and you don't know the first thing about it. Fellows like you, all right, what they see of you, but you don't give them a chance."

Dud stared thoughtfully at the green shade before him. "Ye-yes, I suppose that's true, Jimmy. But I don't like to stick around when fellows are getting up things because I think that maybe they

won't want me in on it and that if I'm there they'll think they have to ask me."

"Huh! What if they do have to ask you? Let 'em! Then when they see that you're a regular feller they'll ask you next time without having to."

"But I wonder if I am."

"Am what?" asked Jimmy ungrammatically.

"A 'regular feller.' Maybe I'm not. I wonder——"

Jimmy threw up his hands in despair. "Oh, gee, he's at it again! Dud, what you want to do is stop wondering. You're the finest little wonderer that ever came down the pike, all right, but you spend so much time at it that you don't get anywhere. Now, you take my advice, old chap, and stop wondering whether fellows like you or don't like you. Just get out and butt in a little. When you see a crowd walk right into the middle of it and find out whether it's a fight or a frolic. And, whatever it is, take a hand. Now there's some mighty good advice, Dud, take it from me. I didn't know I had it in me! And let me tell you another thing, kid. If you expect to have a show for the first team you want to crawl out of your shell and rub shoulders with fellows. Get hunky with the first team crowd, do you see? Be—be more of a —well, more of a regular feller, like I said before. Don't try too hard to be popular, though. Fel-

lows get onto that and won't stand for it. Just —just be natural!"

"I guess I'm being natural," answered Dud, with a smile, "and that is where the trouble is. I guess I'll have to wait until next year. A lower middle fellow feels sort of fresh if he tries to mix in with upper middlers."

"Piffle! Lots of your class are thick as thieves with upper middle chaps. Look at young Whatshisname—Stiles. He's always traveling with upper middlers—Ordway and Blake and that bunch."

"Ned Stiles has more cheek than I have. Besides, I don't think fellows like him particularly, Jimmy. He sort of toadies, doesn't he?"

"He's a perfect ass, if you ask me. But they seem to stand for him."

"Well, but I don't want to be 'stood for'; I want fellows to—to want me."

"All right. Give 'em a chance then. You're all right, Dud, only you're shy. That's what's the matter with you, old chap, you're just plain shy! Never thought of it before. Look here, now, I'll tell you what you do. You forget all about your dear little self and get over being—being—gee, what's the word I want? Being self-conscious! That's it! That's your trouble, self-consciousness." Jimmy beamed approval at himself. "Best way to do it is to—to do it! Tell you what, we'll make

a start tonight, eh? Let's go out and visit someone. Who do you know that you'd like to know better?"

"I'd like to know Hugh Ordway, for one," said Dud hesitatingly. "But I guess he wouldn't care about knowing me, and so——"

"Stow it! That's just what you mustn't do, do you see? You mustn't 'wonder' whether a fellow wants to know you or not. You just take it for granted that he does. Say to yourself, 'I'm a good feller, a regular feller. I'm as good as you are. Of course you want to know me. Why not?' See the idea?"

Dud nodded doubtfully. "Still, Hugh Ordway's a bit——"

"A bit what?" demanded Jimmy impatiently.

"I mean he's awfully popular and has piles of friends and he wouldn't be likely to—to want to know me."

"Oh, piffle! Ordway's just like any of us—except that he happens to be English and have a Lord or a Duke or something for a father. I don't know him very well myself, but that's just because he trains with the football crowd—Blake and Winslow and that bunch. But I know him plenty well enough to visit, and that's just what we'll do this evening, Dud."

"Maybe we'd better leave it for some other

night," replied Dud uneasily. "I've got a lot of lessons tonight and——"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Jimmy mirthlessly. "Where have I heard that before?" He pulled himself from his chair with a groan and pointed a stern finger at his chum. "You'll start right in with me this very evening, Dud, and be a regular feller! And no more punk excuses, either! I'm going to take you in hand, son, and when I get through with you you won't know yourself. Here, *stop that!*"

"What?" asked Dud startledly.

"You know what! You were beginning to wonder! I saw you! No more of that, understand? The first time I catch you wondering I'll—I'll take my belt to you!"

CHAPTER II

THE ENTERING WEDGE

IF you have by any chance read a previous narrative of events at Grafton School entitled "Rivals for the Team" you are sufficiently acquainted with the scene of this story, and, also, with many of the characters. But since it is quite possible that you have never even heard of the former narrative, it devolves on the historian to introduce a certain amount of descriptive matter at about this stage, something he has as little taste for as have you. Descriptions are always tiresome, and so we'll have this as short as possible.

Grafton School, then, occupies a matter of ten acres a half-mile east of the town of that name and at the foot of the hill which is known as Mount Grafton. Like many another New England school, it is shaded by elms, boasts many fine expanses of velvety turf and, so to speak, laves its feet in a gently-flowing river. The buildings on the campus consist of three dormitories, the more venerable School Hall, the gymnasium and the Principal's residence, and of these all save the two latter stretch

in a straight line across the middle of the three-acre expanse. The gymnasium is slightly back from the line and the Principal's cottage is a bit in advance, its vine-covered porch looking along the fronts of the other buildings and its rear windows peering down into Crumbie Street. School Hall is in the center. Trow comes next on the left, and then Lothrop. On the right of the older building stands Manning, which shelters the younger boys, and somewhat "around the corner" is the gymnasium.

Graveled walks lead across the campus, under spreading elm trees, to Crumbie Street on one side, to River Street on the other, to School Street straight in front. Beyond School Street is the Green, a block-wide parallelogram on which, at the corner of School and River Streets, two smaller dormitories stand. These, Morris and Fuller, are converted dwellings of limited accommodations. The main walk from the steps of School Hall continues across the Green to Front Street, beyond which, descending gently to the Needham River, is Lothrop Field. An ornamental wall and gate commemorate the name of the giver. The Field House flanks the steps on the left and beyond lie the football gridirons, the baseball diamonds, the tennis courts and the blue-gray cinder track. The distant weather-stained building on the river bank is the boathouse.

Grafton School looks after slightly over two hundred boys between the ages of twelve and twenty. At the time of which I am writing, February of last year, the number was, I believe, exactly two hundred and ten, of which some thirty-five had attained to the senior class and about eighty were juniors, leaving the upper middle and lower middle classes to share the residue fairly equally. The faculty numbered twelve, beginning with Doctor Duncan, the Principal, and ending with Mrs. Fair, the matron. Doctor Duncan's full title is Charles William Duncan, A.M., Ph.D., but he is better known as "Charley"! There was—and doubtless are—also a Mrs. Duncan and a Miss Duncan, but they are not likely to enter into this narrative. So much then for our stage setting. I might keep on, but I fear you are weary, and I know I am!

Hugh Ordway roomed on the top floor of Lothrop, the newest and most luxurious of the dormitories, sharing the suite of study and two bedrooms with Bert Winslow. Hugh's father was English and his mother American, and, although Hugh had been born on the other side and had spent most of his sixteen years there, he declared himself to be half American. His full name was Hugh Oswald Brodwick Ordway, and in spite of the fact that by reason of his father being the Marquis of Lockely, Hugh had every right to the title of Earl of Ordway,

he was generally known at Grafton as "Hobo," a nickname evolved from his initials. As he was a straight, well-built, clear-skinned young chap with quiet brown eyes and an undeniable air of breeding, the nickname was amusingly incongruous if one stopped to consider it. But Hugh had been known as Hobo Ordway ever since fall, when his cleverness as a running halfback on the first football team had surprised and delighted the school, and nowadays the name was too familiar to excite any comment. Hugh's particular friends were more likely to call him " 'Ighness," however.

It was Hugh, alone in the study, who responded to the knock at the door shortly after supper that evening and who successfully disguised the surprise he felt when he recognized his visitors as Jimmy Logan and Dudley Baker. He made them welcome quite as heartily as though he had been expecting them all day, and Dud, who had hung back all the way up the three flights of slate stairs, was vastly relieved. The conversation skipped from one subject to another for the first few minutes, during which time Hugh, perched on the window-seat, leaving the easy-chairs to his guests, hugged his knees to his chin, piloted the conversation and secretly wondered at the visit.

You are not to suppose, however, that Hugh was the only one of the three at his ease. Such a sup-

position shows on your part a vast ignorance of Jimmy Logan. Jimmy was a stranger to embarrassment. Had Hugh been the President of the United States or the King of England or—well, "Home Run" Baker, Jimmy would have been just as splendidly at ease as he was this moment. He might have assumed a more dignified attitude in the Morris chair and his voice might have held a more respectful tone, but beyond that—no, not Jimmy! Just now Jimmy was humorously recounting his skiing adventures that afternoon and Hugh was chuckling over them. Dud smiled when Hugh laughed, sitting rather stiffly in his chair, and tried his best to look animated and pleasant and only succeeded in looking anxious and uncomfortable. Jimmy did his best to get Dud to talk, but Dud's conversation consisted largely of "Yes" and "No" and Hugh secretly thought him a bit of a stick. Jimmy was wondering whether to withdraw as gracefully as possible before Dud created any worse impression when the door opened to admit a black-haired, dark-eyed fellow of seventeen who, with less command over his features than Hugh, looked frankly surprised when he saw who the visitors were. The surprise even extended to his voice as he greeted them.

"Hello, Jimmy," said Bert Winslow. "What are you doing up here? Haven't seen you around

here for ages." He spoke to Dud then, hesitating a moment as though not certain of the latter's name. Dud, noting the fact, felt his embarrassment increase and wished that Jimmy would give the word to leave. But Jimmy had already abandoned thoughts of withdrawing. He liked Bert Winslow, just as most fellows did, and welcomed the chance to talk to him. Bert and Jimmy were both members of "Lit"—short for Literary Society—and only two evenings ago had been pitted against each other in one of the impromptu weekly debates and had struggled along nip and tuck until Jimmy, abandoning facts, had in a wild flow of rhetoric won the meeting. Bert alluded to it now as he tossed his cap through the open door of his bedroom.

"Jimmy, that was a fine lot of hot air you got off the other night," he said with a grin. "Didn't your folks ever teach you anything about the beauties of truthfulness?"

Jimmy laughed. "Sure, but I had to beat you somehow, Bert. Besides, what I said may be so for all I know!"

"Huh! You just said the first thing that came into that silly head of yours! Did you ever hear such a mess of rot as he sprang, Hugh?"

Hugh smiled. "It sounded all right! Some of the figures were corking. You must have a wonderful memory, Logan!"

"Memory!" snorted Bert, seating himself beside Hugh on the window-seat. "There wasn't a figure that was right! I looked it up afterwards. Did you hear him, Baker? Oh, no, you're Forum, aren't you?"

"Yes," replied Dud. He tried very hard to follow that up with something brilliant or amusing in regard to Jimmy's debating, but couldn't think of anything, possibly because Bert's tone had held some of the careless contempt with which members of a society spoke of its rival, and Dud wished just for the moment that he, too, was "Lit."

Perhaps Hugh thought that his chum had verged on discourtesy, for he observed quickly: "They tell me you chaps have some awfully good talkers in Forum, Baker."

Dud agreed. "I guess Joe Leslie is our best; he and Guy Murtha."

"Murtha's better than Joe, I think," said Jimmy. "Anyway, he did a lot better last year in the debate with Mount Morris."

"Joe's a wonder at hammering home facts," said Bert. "Guy's better at the eloquence stuff, though. Speaking of Guy, Hugh, reminds me that I told him you were going to try for the outfield this spring and he said he was mighty glad because if you could get on the base he was certain you could get around."

"Oh, but I say, Bert, I don't know that I shall! Try for baseball, I mean."

"Of course you will!"

"But I don't know much about it. You say it's quite different from cricket, eh?"

"Quite, 'Ighness! You've seen baseball played, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes, once or twice, but——"

"I should think a fair cricket player would easily get the hang of baseball," said Jimmy. "I guess it's as hard to catch a cricket ball as a baseball, isn't it? I suppose you're a rattling good cricket player, Ordway."

"Oh, no, really I'm not," exclaimed Hugh. "I've played a bit at it, of course. You chaps bowl—I mean pitch to the batters so like thunder, don't you? I fancy I'll be scared to stand up there, eh?"

"You might if Gus Weston was pitching," laughed Bert. "You going to play this year, Jimmy?"

"Oh, I guess so. What would the dear old second do without me?"

"Aren't you trying for the first, though? You're as good a fielder as Parker, I guess."

"I may. The fact is, Bert, I'm sort of used to the dear old second. It would be like leaving home to go to the first. Still, I may decide to break home ties and meet you fellows there."

"I fancy you're not likely to meet me there,"

said Hugh. "I'll be an awful dub if I try it, I know. Do you play, Baker?"

"A little," answered Dud.

"Dud's the coming Mathewson," said Jimmy. "Got to watch him, we have. Some twirler!"

"Really?" asked Bert, evidently not much impressed. "That's fine, Baker. The second rather needed pitchers last spring."

"He's going out for the first," said Jimmy. "Dud's like me, you know. When Duty calls——" Jimmy smiled eloquently.

"I say, though, Logan, who is this Johnnie you spoke of? Mathews, wasn't it?"

"Not Johnnie; Christopher," replied Jimmy gravely. "I referred to Mr. Christopher Mathewson, better known as 'Matty,' the Dean of American Pitchers. Dud and 'Matty' are as thick as thieves; that is, Dud is! Dud reads everything 'Matty' writes and can tell you off-hand how many games 'Matty' pitched last year and all the other years, and how many he won, and what his averages are and all the rest of it. He has a gallery of Mathewson pictures and he's the proud possessor of a ball that Mathewson used in a game with Philadelphia back in 1760 or thereabouts. I don't know how he got that ball, but I suspect that he swiped it."

"It was given to me," said Dud defensively. Then

he added, embarrassed: "You mustn't mind what Jimmy says. He talks a lot of nonsense."

"I say, though," exclaimed Hugh, "I do hope you get on the first, Baker. It must be a lot of fun to do the pitching, eh? More fun than fielding, I fancy."

"Have you pitched much?" inquired Bert politely.

"I've been trying to for a couple of years," answered Dud. "I don't suppose I'll make the first this year, of course, but Murtha said he'd be glad to have me try, and so——"

"You must make allowances for his modesty," said Jimmy. "He's really rather a shark at it. He can tell you just how to pitch any ball ever discovered, from a straight one to a 'floater.'"

"Question is, I guess," Bert laughed, "whether he can *pitch* 'em. I know *how* to pitch a 'knuckle ball,' but I can't do it. I remember now, Baker, you pitched some on the second last year, didn't you?"

"Only three games, or parts of them, Winslow. I dare say I won't be good enough this year, but—I thought I'd try."

"Of course," said Bert heartily. "Nothing like trying. The trouble is, though, you've got some good ones to stack up against, eh? There's Nate Leddy and Ben Myatt——"

"And Gus Weston," observed Jimmy gravely.

Bert smiled. "Just the same, Gus has pitched some good games for us. But isn't he a wonder when he goes up?"

Jimmy chuckled. "Gus Weston can go up quicker and higher than any fellow I ever saw," he said. "And when he *is* wild——" He ended with an impressive whistle.

"He looked pretty promising last spring," continued Bert. "Remember the game he pitched against Middleboro? They only got six hits off him, I think."

"Yes, and Kelly is another chap that is likely to make good this year," said Jimmy. "Oh, we're pretty well off for twirlers, but you wait until Dud gets going. And speaking of going, Dud, what do you say if we do a little of it?"

"Don't rush off," said Bert. "Well, come around again, Jimmy."

Probably the invitation was meant to include Dud, but Hugh thought that Dud might not interpret it so and added cordially, "Yes, do, fellows!"

On the way downstairs Jimmy said: "Well, we got out of that pretty well, Dud. I thought for a while you were going to spoil everything by monopolizing the conversation the way you did, but——"

"I don't seem to know what to talk about," said

Dud ruefully. "I guess Ordway thought me an awful ass."

"Well, he rather pointedly invited you to come back, so I don't think you need to worry about that. The next time——"

"There won't be any next time," interrupted the other. "It's just like you said, Jimmy. I can't mix and there's no use trying."

"Oh, yes, there is! We've just started. That was the—the entering wedge, so to say. We'll drop around again next week. And between now and then I'll put you through a course of sprouts, old chap. We'll mix in society. Just as soon as you can learn to forget your plaguey self, Dud, you'll get on finely. The trouble is with you that you just sit and worry about what fellows are thinking of you. But I'll break you of that quick enough."

"I guess we'll call it off," muttered Dud.

"And I guess we won't," was the firm response. "Having set my hand to the plow, Dudley, I never look back. That's me. My full name is Grim Determination. All others are impostors. Accept no substitutes. Guaranteed to comply with the Pure Food Law. After you, Dud. One flight and turn to the right, please."

CHAPTER III

29 LOTHROP

TRUE to his promise—or threat, if you think with Dud—Jimmy haled his protesting friend from room to room in the evenings, made him join the throngs on the ice or the toboggan slide in the afternoons and on all occasions dragged him into the conversations and, to use his own expression, "got him in the spot-light." It can't be truthfully said that his efforts met with overwhelming success, however. Dud didn't shine as a conversationalist or display any traits calculated to win popularity. No one disliked him in the least. Most of the time few were really conscious of his presence, in spite of Jimmy's untiring efforts. Personally, as has been suggested, Dud didn't take kindly to being exhibited and exploited, and when a fortnight or so after the inception of the undertaking Jimmy actually got to telling jokes and crediting them to Dud, the latter was supremely uncomfortable. Jimmy would chuckle and say: "Dud got off a good one the other day, fellows." And then he would follow with some more or less bril-

liant remark or joke that sounded to Dud horribly flat. Generally the hearers laughed and shot surprised glances at the silent and embarrassed Dud, but he didn't win recognition as a wit or a sage for all of that. Had they heard the things from Dud first-hand they might have been more impressed. As it was the credit went rather to Jimmy than Dud.

Jimmy played Boswell to Dud's Doctor Johnson with remarkable enthusiasm and patience. He evolved all sorts of schemes, most of which his chum promptly refused to consider, designed to waft Dud into the white light of publicity. For instance, he conceived the brilliant idea of having Dud write a notable article for *The Campus,* the school monthly. Dud had no serious objection to that project, but it fell through because neither of them could think of a subject to write on. Then Jimmy suggested that Dud get someone to break through the ice on the river so Dud could rescue him. Jimmy said he would be glad to impersonate the drowning character if he wasn't afraid of catching cold and having rheumatism in his throwing arm. It was all highly entertaining for Jimmy and he thoroughly enjoyed it, but Dud was getting very tired of it. Every now and then Jimmy had what he called a "show down." At such times he would take a list from his drawer in the study table and check off

the names of fellows whose acquaintance Dud had succeeded in making since the last time.

"Churchill, we got him. Check for Churchill. He was a brand new one, wasn't he? Roy Dresser, check. Dresser was rather a success, Dud. I think he rather took to you. We must call there again. I'll make a note of that. Dresser's room is a good place to meet fellows. Parker, check. Parker's an ass, anyway. Ayer—I say, Dud, we haven't met Neil Ayer yet. Do you know him at all?"

"Only to speak to."

"We'll go after Ayer this evening, then. I know where to find him. He will be in Joe Leslie's room, I guess. Foster Tray, check. Tray's a good sort. Zanetti—that's another chap we've missed. We'll have to find him with Nate Leddy some time. I don't know him at all. He's a good fellow to know, though. Stands in with the football and the track crowds. I tell you what, Dud! Why not go out for the Track Team?"

"Because I can't do anything," laughed Dud.

"How do you know you can't?" asked Jimmy, untroubled. "Besides, you wouldn't have to really *do* anything. You could have a try at something and you'd meet a lot of fellows. Jumping isn't awfully hard. Why not try the broad jump?"

"I couldn't do that and pitch too, you idiot."

"That's so. I forgot. Still, some fellows do

go in for baseball and track. There's Cherry, for instance. Well, never mind. Maybe we'd better —er—concentrate." Jimmy sat back and studied Dud speculatively, tapping his pen against his teeth the while. "What we've got to do, Dud," he continued presently, in the tones of one who has reached a weighty conclusion after much thought, "is to put it all over those other box artists. That's our line, Dud. We've got to spring you as a startling phenom! Yes, sir, that's the game!"

"That's all well enough, Jimmy, but suppose I can't pitch a little bit when the time comes?"

"By Ginger, you've got to! Look here, you're wasting time. You ought to be at it every day. You ought to get down in the cage in the gym and practice. What time is it now? Nearly six, eh? Too late today, then. But tomorrow we'll put in a half-hour, and the next day, too, and right along until they call candidates. I'll catch you. I'll borrow a mitt somewhere. It'll be good fun, too. Practice for both of us. Great scheme, eh?"

"Do you mind?" asked Dud eagerly.

"Love to! We've got a week yet and you ought to be able to get a lot of practice in a week. That's settled, then. But we mustn't forget the—er—the social side of the campaign. So let's see." Jimmy bent over his list again. "Quinn, check. Milford —had him before. Forbes——"

The second visit to Hugh Ordway's study came off right on schedule, nine days after the first call, but on this occasion Dud and Jimmy found the room jammed from door to windows with fellows and a loud and even violent argument going on. Their appearance went practically unnoticed and they found seats with some difficulty and became for a while silent listeners. The argument proved to be concerned with the election the evening before of one Starling Meyer as captain of the Hockey Team. The hockey team had just finished a disastrous season, ending with a second defeat by Grafton's ancient rival, Mount Morris. Lack of hard ice had aided in the team's demoralization, but besides that things had gone badly from start to finish, and there were many who credited the aforementioned Meyer with having been largely to blame. "Pop" Driver, who played right guard on the eleven and was normally good-natured to a fault, expressed the views of the anti-Meyer faction.

"Meyer," Pop was saying, "has caused more trouble all the winter than he's worth. Everything that Yetter's wanted to do one way, Star's insisted on doing another. You fellows know that, all of you. Look at the way they changed the style of play in the middle of the season. Yetter started out playing four men on defense and it worked all right. Then Star got to saying that we weren't

scoring enough points and that the four-men-back business was all wrong. He grouched and sulked about it until Yetter gave in to him. After that we got licked right along, with one or two exceptions, and finally Yetter went back to the old style again, and Star threatened to quit and there was the dickens to pay for awhile. Star's simply no use unless he can be the whole shooting-match."

"Well, they've made him captain," said Jim Quinn, football manager, "so now he can show what he knows."

"There's no sense in blaming everything on Star Meyer," declared Ned Musgrave. "Yetter's a good chap, but he hadn't any business being captain. There's where the whole trouble began. If Yetter——"

"Warren would have been all right," said Bert Winslow, "if Star had let him alone. But Star hates to see anyone else have any say about anything. He's a peach of a hockey player, I'll grant you that, but he's a peach of a trouble-maker, too. And I'll bet you anything things will be in a worse mess next year than they were this."

"Why didn't they elect Gus Weston?" asked Roy Dresser. "Gus would have made a dandy leader."

"Because Star pulled all the strings he could," answered Pop, "and scared the fellows into voting for him."

"I happen to know, Pop," interposed Musgrave warmly, "that more than three-fourths of the team wanted Star for captain long before election. You might as well be fair to him, Pop. Give him a show. Don't convict a fellow before he's tried, I say!"

"All right, Ned," answered Pop good-naturedly. "We'll let him have his trial. Maybe you're right, too. Star may make a better captain than he did a first lieutenant. Let's hope so. I won't be here to see, though."

"What makes you think so?" inquired Nick Blake maliciously, raising a laugh at Driver's expense. Pop, as he himself put it, was doing the four-year course in five, and there was always some doubt as to his getting through in five. Pop grinned now and shook his head.

"They'll give me my diploma to get rid of me, Nick," he said.

Jimmy, who had remained quiescent until now, took advantage of a momentary lull in the discussion and chuckled. Pop, beside him, turned inquiringly. "What's on your mind, Jimmy?" he inquired.

"I was just thinking of something Dud got off awhile ago," replied Jimmy, still visibly amused. Dud threw an entreating look at him, but Jimmy pretended not to see it.

"Dud who?" asked Pop.

"Dud Baker, over here." Jimmy's glance indicated his friend. "We were talking about the hockey team losing so many games one day and Dud said he guessed the trouble with them"—Jimmy had managed to gain the attention of the room by now—"was that they were weak from Star-vation!"

Dud looked anything but like the author of the bonmot at that moment, but the audience laughed, even Ned Musgrave, and Jimmy credited himself with a bull's-eye.

"The pun," observed Nick Blake gravely, "is considered the lowest form of humor."

"I think that's mighty clever," exclaimed Hugh. "You're hipped because you didn't think of it yourself, Nick."

"Dry up ,'Ighness! I was about to say when you so rudely interrupted that it is, of course, necessary to consider one's audience, and that, having the mentality of the audience in mind, Baker's joke may be considered clever, even brilliant. For my part——"

"Choke him, somebody," said Bert. "After all, say what you like about Star, you've got to acknowledge that there's much to ad-Meyer about——"

But Nick's groan of anguish drowned the rest, and Dresser, pretending disgust, arose to depart, setting the example for several others. Jimmy, fear-

ing that Dud's gloomy silence might undo the effect created by the joke, thought the moment a good one for retiring and led his chum away. Outside, Dud remonstrated again.

"I wish you wouldn't, Jimmy," he said. "I feel such an awful fool when you spring those jokes and tell fellows I made 'em. They must know I didn't!"

"Why? You do say things as good as that, don't you? When there's no one but me around, I mean."

"I don't know. Maybe. I didn't think that was awfully funny, anyway, Jimmy."

Jimmy chuckled. "I do. And the others did. Cheer up, Dud. I'll make a celebrity of you in spite of yourself!"

Later, back in Number 29 Lothrop, Bert Winslow laughed suddenly while he was getting ready for bed and Hugh, hearing, called across from his own bedroom.

"What's the joke, Bert?"

"I was thinking of the one Jimmy Logan sprung; about the hockey team being weak from Star-vation. It isn't so bad, eh?"

"Rather clever, but it was that chap Baker who said it, wasn't it?"

"I guess so. But look here," continued Bert, appearing in his doorway in the course of a struggle

with his collar, "why is it Baker never gets off any of those things himself? It's always Jimmy Logan who springs 'em. All Baker does is to sit and look glum. If he's so all-fired clever why doesn't he say something once in a while? I think he's a bit of a pill."

"He's not so bad, I fancy," replied Hugh. "Maybe you have to know him. Some chaps are like that, if you know what I mean."

"Yes, but——" Bert's voice died out until he had at last wrenched the refractory collar from his neck. Then: "Here's another funny thing, Hugh," he said. "Jimmy lugs that fellow around every place with him; sort of butts in with him everywhere. You'd think Jimmy was a—a nurse-maid or something. Looks to me as if he was trying to introduce his young friend into Society. I wouldn't care a bit if he forgot to bring him up here the next time."

"What have you got against him?" inquired Hugh.

"Nothing much. He's only a lower middler, though, and lower middlers ought to keep to their own set. Besides, look at the cheek of the kid! Going to try for pitcher on the first! What do you know about that?"

"But if he's really any good at it," began the other.

"How could he be? He can't be more than fifteen, I guess."

"You were young once yourself, old chap."

"Yes, but I didn't try to pitch on the first team," grumbled Bert. "He's too fresh."

"I'll tell you just what's the matter with him," said Hugh, appearing in the study in a suit of pink-striped pajamas. "He's shy, Bert."

"Shy! And going out for the first nine!"

"I know it doesn't look so," laughed Hugh, "but that's just what his trouble is, and I rather fancy that Logan, out of pure kindness, is trying to bring him out, if you know what——"

"Pure kindness!" scoffed Bert. "Jimmy's kind enough, I guess, but if that's his game you can bet all you've got that he's doing it for a lark. I know Jimmy!"

CHAPTER IV

A CHANCE MEETING

TWO days after the visit to Hugh Ordway's room Jimmy Logan's joke which he had attributed to Dud bore unexpected fruit. The remark had tickled the fellows who had heard it and consequently they very promptly repeated it, with the natural result that within twenty-four hours it got around to Starling Meyer himself. Star, as he was generally called, was a large, good-looking boy of seventeen, well supplied with self-conceit. He was a rattling good hockey player, undoubtedly the best in school, and a fair performer with the second nine in the outfield. There his athletic prowess ended, for he considered—or pretended to consider—track sports unimportant and football unscientific. He was a clever student and stood high in class, and was, in consequence, rather a favorite with the faculty. As a member of the Forum Society his activities were critical rather than constructive, for he took no part in the debates beyond attending them and pointing out the deficiencies of the debaters in a superior manner. Most fellows liked

him, especially those who were not clever in the lines he affected, and even those who saw through his poses and couldn't stand his conceit accorded him honor for his brilliancy in class-room and on the ice. Although Star roomed next door to Dud, the latter knew him only as he knew three-fourths of the students, that is, to nod to on passing. Once or twice, since they had both been rather unimportant members of the second baseball team last year, they had spoken. But beyond that they were strangers, and so when, two days after that visit to 29 Lothrop, Star Meyer stopped Dud in front of Trow by the simple but effective method of seizing him by the arm, Dud was somewhat surprised. Star was scowling and Dud didn't need more than one glance at his face to realize that he was angry. Even when angry, however, Star didn't allow himself to forget his pose of contemptuous superiority, and now when he spoke he managed a one-sided smile designed to remind Dud of the honor being done him.

"Baker, you're a remarkably fresh young kid," began Star, "and some day that mouth of yours is going to get you into a heap of trouble. Ever think of that?"

Dud, puzzled, moved restively in the bigger boy's grasp but failed to get free. "I don't know what you mean, Meyer," he protested.

"Yes, you do. What's the good of lying? After this you leave my name out of your funny jokes; hear?"

"I don't know what——" began Dud again. Then recollection of Jimmy's bon-mot came to him and he flushed.

"The next time I'll kick you from here to the river," said Star in a quietly venomous tone. "I'd do it now for a couple of buttons, too. You leave my name strictly alone, Baker, after this. Understand me?"

"Yes, but honest, Meyer, I didn't say——" Then, however, Dud had to stop, for, although innocent, to insist on the fact would put the blame on Jimmy. He dropped his eyes. "All right," he muttered.

Somehow that phrase seemed to add fresh fuel to Star's smoldering anger, for he took a fresh and very painful grip on Dud's arm and said: "All right, is it? Well, it isn't all right, kid! You're a sneaky little bounder, that's what you are! Saying smart-alick things and then trying to lie out of it! Don't you ever mention my name again. If you do I'll get you and you won't forget it in a hurry. Now you beat it!"

With a sudden wrench at the captive arm, Star spun Dud around and aimed a kick at him. Fortunately, a premonition of what was happening

"'You're a sneaky little bounder, that's what you are!'"

caused Dud to jump aside and Star's foot missed its goal. Dud, angry himself now, turned with clenched fists and flashing eyes. But the situation was distinctly hopeless. Star topped him by a head and Dud was suddenly conscious of his own physical inferiority. Still he might have tried conclusions had it not been for the smile of haughty contempt on the other's countenance. Somehow that smile was too much. It seemed to say: "What, you dare to show disrespect to *me?* Begone, impious mortal!" Dud's fingers straightened again, he gulped down his resentment, stole a doubtful glance at a group of fellows who were looking on curiously from the dormitory steps and walked away, trying his best to appear dignified and unconcerned but secretly feeling like a whipped cur. Later, when he recounted the episode to Jimmy the latter took him to task vigorously.

"Why didn't you tell him you didn't say it? I'm not afraid of the big fraud!"

"Considering you'd told everyone that I had said it——"

"Yes, that's so." Jimmy frowned mightily. "Well, then, why didn't you light into him? Don't you see that the fellows who were watching you will think you were afraid of him?"

"I wanted to, but—but somehow he looked so—so sort of *superior*——"

"Yah! That's Star's best bluff! Bet you anything if you'd hit him just one little tap on the nose he'd have run! Hang it, Dud, you've got to play up, boy! Here I am making you out a regular feller, and the first chance you get to—to put yourself in the lime-light you fall down! Why, you had the finest sort of an opportunity to distinguish yourself! Think what it would have meant to you, Dud! Fellows would have said: 'What do you know about young Baker licking Star Meyer right in front of Trow this morning? Had it all over him, they say! Beat him something brutal! Some class to that kid, eh?' That's the way they'd have talked you up. Now you've gone and——"

"Don't be an ass," begged Dud with spirit. "You know plaguey well I couldn't lick Star. He's six inches taller than I am, and he's at least seventeen years old, and he's—he's stronger——"

"Son, when you get in a row with another chap," replied Jimmy emphatically, "don't you stop to figure out how much bigger or stronger he is. You jump in and get the first lick at him. You'll be surprised to find what a lot of inches that first whack takes off the other chap! What you should have done——"

"Well, I didn't," said Dud shortly. "You wouldn't have, either, I guess."

Jimmy grinned. "Never mind what I'd have done, Dud. I'm not making a name for myself. I'm not——"

"Neither am I. You are. And I'm getting sick of it. It's no use, anyway. Let's drop it."

"Drop nothing," replied Jimmy vigorously. "We're getting on famously. Why——"

"You've just said I've queered myself!"

"I said you'd missed a chance to make a hit. So you have. But we can fix that all right. Those fellows who saw it will talk, I guess, but we can talk too. Who were they?"

"I don't know. Stiles was one, though."

"The sweetest little gossip in school," commented Jimmy. "All right, Dud, you leave it to me. Your Uncle James will fix it all hunky for you. You sit tight and—yes, that's the game! Dud, you must go around looking very dignified for a couple of days."

"Rot!"

"I mean it. You must make fellows think that you resisted a great temptation and that it has—er—has sobered you. Get me?"

"What temptation?" asked Dud, puzzled.

"Why, the temptation to lose your temper and beat Star up, of course," explained Jimmy patiently. "That's our line, don't you see? It was only by—by superhuman control that you manfully resisted

the impulse to fell him to the ground! Great stuff, what? You just wait till I tell it!"

"Jimmy, for the love of lemons don't start anything else! Every time you get to talking you put me in a hole. You've got fellows thinking I'm a wit, and they all look at me in a funny sort of a way as if they were waiting for me to spring something bright, and I get tongue-tied and can't think of a thing to say. And you're telling it around that I'm going to be a wonderful pitcher, too. They don't believe that, of course, but it makes me look silly. And now you want to make me out a—a scrapper——"

"Not at all, not at all! Star resented your remark about him and spoke insultingly to you. You gave him a beautiful calling down and he didn't dare talk back. Then, when your back was turned, he tried to kick you, and you, stifling your—er—your natural and excusable indignation, kept your temper wonderfully and walked superbly away. All through the encounter your dignity was sublime!"

Dud groaned. "You'll simply make me out an awful ass and fellows will laugh at you—and me. I wish you wouldn't, Jimmy!"

"That remark merely shows how little you appreciate my powers of diplomacy," replied the other in tones of sorrowful resignation. "But never mind. I shall continue to do my best for you, Dud,

even though my efforts are unappreciated, misunderstood. Leave it all to me, my young friend. Appear very dignified and—and aloof. Let's see you look aloof, Dud."

Dud only looked disgusted.

"Not a bit like it," resumed the other cheerfully. "More like this. Get it? Sort of hinting at a secret sorrow or—no, that's not exactly the idea, either. You want to look like the hero in the second act of the play, when everyone thinks he stole the jewels and the heroine spurns him. He knows that he's innocent, you see, and knows that the audience will know it in the last act. So he just looks disdainful and a bit sad and sort of moons around by himself and smokes a good deal to salve his sorrow——"

"I can't smoke," interrupted Dud practically. "They won't let me, and I don't like it anyway."

Jimmy waved his hand airily. "You get the idea, though, Dud. 'Too proud to fight' is your line, old chap. Now shut up and let me think."

Jimmy's thinking resulted in action. That afternoon about four he might have been observed lingering idly in front of School Hall, hands in pockets, whistling tunelessly, evidently quite at a loose end. Nick Blake tried to entice him up to Lit to play pool, Gus Weston suggested the joys of a trip to the village for hot soda and Pete Gordon strove

to lure him to his room. Jimmy resisted heroically and was left to his devices. It was a particularly disagreeable afternoon, with a hard wind freezing the pools along the walk, and Jimmy from time to time glanced impatiently at the big doors behind him. But it was nearly the half-hour before they finally opened again to emit Ned Stiles. Warned by the creaking of the portal, Jimmy instantly assumed the appearance of one who, passing, has his attention attracted by the sound of an opening door. This in the face of the fact that he had been all along aware that Stiles, in trouble with Mr. Gibbs, the history instructor, had been having an after-school séance with "Gusty" in a classroom. Stiles was an upper middler, seventeen years old, an uninteresting and rather sycophantic youth whom Jimmy secretly disliked very much. Stiles suspected the fact and was consequently somewhat surprised when Jimmy, after nodding briefly, halted and awaited him at the foot of the steps.

"Hello, Stiles. Rotten day, isn't it? Seen Guy Murtha lately?"

Stiles shook his head, changing his books from one elbow to the other in order to reach his handkerchief and blow a very red nose. Stiles always had a cold in winter and snuffled from October to April.

"Can't find him anywhere," continued Jimmy in

preoccupied tones, accommodating his steps to those of the other boy and continuing on toward Trow. "Star Meyer said he thought he'd gone to the village. I want to see him awfully."

"I haven't seen him all day, I guess," said Stiles. He was hoping that some of the fellows would look from their windows and see him hob-nobbing with Jimmy.

"Well, I guess I can get him at supper," said the latter. Then he chuckled, and, in response to Stiles' unspoken question, explained, "I was thinking of Star. He hasn't got over it yet, I guess. Grumpy as anything he was."

"Got over what?" asked Stiles eagerly.

"Didn't you hear about it?" Jimmy looked at him incredulously. "Why, Dud Baker gave him an awful calling down this morning and Star took it like a lamb. Say, that kid certainly has got spunk!"

Stiles viewed the other suspiciously, but Jimmy's countenance expressed truth and quiet amusement. Stiles grunted. Then he said "Huh!" doubtfully

"Star was mad as a hornet about something Dud said; some joke or other, you know."

Stiles nodded. "Yes, about the hockey team dying of Star-vation."

"Was that it? Well, anyway, he got after Dud and wanted Dud to apologize and Dud told him to

chase himself, that it was all true and that every fellow in school knew it, and a lot more. And Star was mad enough to bite! Think of Dud getting away with it!"

"I saw it," said Stiles, "but it didn't look—just like that to me. Star had Baker by the arm and it looked like he was reading the riot act to him. And then he tried to kick him and Baker beat it."

"Good thing for Star he did, then," said Jimmy knowingly. "I'd hate to stand up to Dud Baker when he was riled!"

"I didn't know he was—that sort," said Stiles interestedly. They had reached the entrance to Trow and paused at the door.

"Dud Baker? Didn't you ever hear why he left the school he was at before he came here?"

Stiles shook his head.

"Well, it isn't a nice story to tell, although it wasn't all Dud's fault. I heard it from a fellow who was there and saw it. In fact, he helped to carry the other fellow to his room. He was three years older than Dud and a whole head taller, too, they say. But Dud isn't the sort of fellow you can bully. Or he wasn't. Nowadays Dud will stand a lot. I guess after that fracas he learned to keep his temper. The other fellow was in bed a month. It was such a close shave for him that it sort of sobered Dud up and he will go most any length

now to keep from scrapping. He's got an awful punch, they say."

Stiles looked vastly amazed, but Jimmy, glancing from the corners of his eyes, saw to his satisfaction that there was no incredulity in the amazement. Stiles had swallowed the yarn whole and was gasping for more. But Jimmy knew the value of silence.

"Well, I guess I'll run over to Lothrop. If you should see Guy you might tell him I'm looking for him. So long."

"But, look here, Logan," called Stiles eagerly; "what was it Baker said to Star, eh?"

"Oh, I don't know just what he told him, but it was aplenty. And Star took it, too!"

"But he—he kicked Baker! We saw him!"

"Never!" replied Jimmy vehemently. "He may have kicked *at* him. In fact, some fellow told me he did aim a kick at Dud when Dud's back was turned. Said Dud turned like a tiger on him then and he thought sure it was all up with Star. But Dud controlled himself and walked quietly away. Gee, I couldn't have done that, Stiles! It must have been great to see, wasn't it?"

"Why—er—yes, only——" Stiles paused. "It looked to us as if Baker was scared, Logan. Of course he wasn't, but that's what it looked like. I didn't know he was such a scrapper."

"Who, Dud?" Jimmy spread his hands expressively. "Take my advice, old man, and don't let him hear you say he looked scared, though maybe he wouldn't touch you. And then again he might lose control of that temper of his and—— Better not risk it, I guess."

"I wouldn't think of it," said Stiles earnestly. "I didn't really think he was scared, you know; only some of the other fellows who saw it said it *looked* that way. Don't tell Dud Baker I said that, will you?"

"Me? No indeed. In fact, I wouldn't mention the thing to him at any price. He's awfully touchy, you see, and ever since this morning he's been sort of like a bear with a sore head. I guess there's times when he wishes he'd forgotten himself and let fly! Well, so long!"

Jimmy walked on toward Lothrop and Ned Stiles plunged through the door and hurried down the corridor to leave his books and then spread his news to all who would hearken to it. And Jimmy, approaching the first entrance to Lothrop Hall, winked gravely at the ornamental brass knocker.

CHAPTER V

DUD LOSES HIS TEMPER

"WINTER," observed Jimmy very disgustedly one morning toward the last of February, "is sure 'lingering in the lap of spring,' as the poet hath it. Between you and me, Dud, I guess winter's fallen asleep there! Here it is almost March and everything's still covered up with snow or ice. Or water," he added a second later, his gaze falling to the pools of melting snow that lay in the hollows of the campus.

The windows were wide open and the air that came in, while chill and damp, still, somehow, held a suggestion—or perhaps a faint promise—of spring. But the sky was leaden, between the walks the sod was hidden under patches of dirty snow or ice that had begun to melt a little and the whole morning world had a tired and bedraggled look. Jimmy, still attired in pajamas, shivered and turned disapprovingly away. Then his gaze fell on Dud and the disapproval increased, for Dud, half awake a moment before, had nestled down on the

rumpled pillow again and was sleeping peacefully. Jimmy was righteously indignant.

"Wake up, you sluggard!" he bawled, pulling the clothes from the other. "Here I've been talking to you for five minutes, saying perfectly gorgeous things, and you haven't heard a word! Get up, you lazy loafer, and hear the birdies sing—or sneeze! Come out of there!"

Dud came out, rather in a heap, blinking confusedly, and strove to pull the clothes from the bed to his shrinking form on the floor. But Jimmy was merciless, and Dud was forced to arise grumblingly and rub his sleepy eyes.

"Wh—what time is it?" he yawned.

"Never mind what time it is," replied Jimmy severely. "It's time you were up and doing——"

"'With a heart for any fate,'" murmured Dud poetically if sleepily. "What day is it?"

"Great Jumpin' Jehosophat!" exclaimed Jimmy. "He doesn't even know the date! It's a Tuesday, darling, and the month's February, and the year ——"

"Then it's today practice begins," said Dud. "I knew there was something." He arose and sought his bath robe. "I'll bet it's awfully early. I don't hear anyone up."

"You hear me up," responded his roommate. "As a matter of fact, I don't know just what time

it is, because you forgot to wind the clock and my watch has stopped and I couldn't find yours. But it must be long after six——"

"Six!" grunted Dud in deep disgust. "What do you go pulling me out of bed at six for? I'm going back again!"

"I said it was long after six. Where's your watch? Have a look at it."

Dud discovered that article at last dangling over the back of a chair, it having escaped from a pocket, and in more mollified tones informed Jimmy that it was twenty to seven. In the corridor a door opened and slippered feet pattered toward the bathroom. Jimmy set his watch and the clock, found his own robe and then, pausing at the door, asked solicitously:

"How's the old arm, Dud?"

"Sore," was the answer. Dud bent it and flexed it—it was his right one—and observed it scowlingly. "It's lame all the way to the shoulder. *Ouch!* And the shoulder's lame, too!"

"Too bad," said Jimmy. "I was afraid you might overdo it, Dud."

"Well, whose silly idea was it, anyway?" demanded Dud indignantly. "Who suggested practicing every day, I'd just like to know?"

"I did, of course, but I didn't tell you to do too much of it and lame yourself, did I? What you've

gone and done, Dud, is catch cold in it. You ought to be mighty careful that way. You ought——"

"Oh, dry up," grumbled Dud. "You make me tired. If you know so pesky much about it, why didn't you say something before? I wouldn't have caught cold in it if you hadn't insisted on slopping around in that rink yesterday with the water up to your ankles! No wonder I caught cold!"

"Well, you'll have to lay off a few days, old chap. It'll be all right again, I guess."

"That's fine, isn't it, when I've got to report for practice this afternoon?"

"You won't have to pitch, though," responded Jimmy consolingly. "Just do the setting-up stuff. Come on and get your bath."

"I don't want any bath," muttered Dud, still feeling of his pitching arm with cautious fingers. "You go ahead."

"Dud," said the other severely, "you've got a grouch. You must have got out of bed the wrong way."

"I did, when you pulled me out," was the pointed reply. "And who wouldn't have a grouch, I'd like to know? I'll have a fat chance to do any pitching, won't I?"

"You can tell 'em you lamed yourself, can't you? Cheer up, Dud, and come ahead before the crowd gathers. I'll rub it for you when we get back."

"Huh! I guess that's what's the matter with it now. You nearly killed me last night with your old massaging, as you called it."

"It may hurt a little," said Jimmy earnestly, "but it's awfully good for you. It's regular Swedish stuff, Dud. I learned it from a chap at home who works in the gym. We ought to have some liniment, though. I wonder if that liquid dentifrice stuff of yours would do."

"I'll do my own rubbing, thanks," replied the other ungraciously. "If it hadn't been for you ——"

"Help!" wailed Jimmy, hurrying through the door. Then came the sound of quick scurrying in the corridor, and Dud, still mooning on the side of the bed, guessed that Jimmy and some other chap were racing for a bathtub. Dud hoped the other fellow would win. He continued to explore the lamed muscles of his arm for several minutes, finding a grim satisfaction in the twinges of pain he evoked. Finally, however, he slung the cords of his bath-robe together and dejectedly followed the others down the corridor. As luck would have it, three other youths were awaiting their turns at the tubs, while Starling Meyer reached the washroom at the same moment Dud did. Star fixed a haughty and scornful glare on the younger boy.

"I'm ahead of you," he announced briefly.

Most any other time Dud would have acquiesced without a murmur, but this morning his peevishness made him combative and courageous. "Like fun you are," he replied scowlingly.

A perceptible thrill went through the other members of the waiting group. Dud Baker and Star Meyer were going to have a scrap! They had heard of Dud's fighting reputation, and now they were to witness an example of that youth's quality! They almost held their breaths in the excitement, their round eyes traveling from Star to Dud and back again expectantly. Star frowned portentously.

"We'll see," he remarked coldly.

"You bet we'll see," agreed Dud, a strange recklessness taking possession of him. Somehow this morning Star didn't look nearly so formidable, perhaps because his eyes were still heavy with sleep or because the flaming red bath-robe in which he was enveloped was so palpable an affront to good taste. Star stared an instant in perplexed surprise and then deliberately turned his gaze away from Dud's pugnacious countenance, indicating contempt and scorn and several other things that riled Dud still further. From the cubicles holding the tubs came the rush and splash of water and the voices of the bathers. No healthy boy ever bathed silently, and the four in the tubs were, judging from the sounds, remarkably robust! Jimmy was chanting a football pæan

at the top of his lungs, another boy was singing something remarkably tuneless and repetitional and the other two were exchanging badinage across the partition at the tops of their voices.

After a moment one of the doors opened, a very pink-hued youth emerged and it was the turn of one of the interested trio. Oddly enough the latter showed a strange disinclination to avail himself of his prerogative. Instead he offered in a whisper to let one of the others precede him. But the reply was a shake of the head, the boy not even removing his fascinated gaze from Dud.

There was nothing for it but to go then, and the youth went, disappearing behind the door most reluctantly. Star moved impatiently from one foot to the other. "You fellows in there, get a move on," he advised loudly. "We've been waiting here ten minutes."

"Keep on waiting, old chap," replied Jimmy, interrupting his song. "Don't know who you are, but you're an awful fibber. I say, Dud, are you there?"

"Yes," growled Dud.

"Hand me a piece of soap from the stand, will you?"

Dud wanted to say no, but thought better of it and ungraciously crossed the washroom and secured a cake of soap. "Catch," he called.

"Stop it!" squealed Jimmy. "Don't chuck! Here, pass it in." The door opened a bit and Jimmy's face appeared in the slit. "Squeeze in," he whispered. "I'm through."

Dud thrust the door open and entered, and Jimmy quickly bolted it again. "Who's out there?" he whispered. But before Dud could inform him Star Meyer's voice was raised in indignant protest.

"You can't do that, Logan! It isn't Baker's turn. There are three of us ahead of him. You come out of there, Baker!"

"I only took half a bath, Star," replied Jimmy amiably. "I'm letting Dud have the other half."

"Yes, you are! No funny business now! Here, Benson, it's your turn. Go ahead in. They can't do that."

Benson, a slim, unaggressive youth, stared at Star in alarm. "I—I'm in no hurry, thanks, Meyer. I—I'd just as lief wait, thanks."

"Then you, whatever your name is, it's your tub!"

The second boy shook his head and grinned. "I don't like that one," he replied diplomatically. "The plug leaks. I'll wait."

Star scowled and looked doubtfully at the closed door. For some reason intense quiet prevailed. Not a splash was heard. "Then if you fellows won't

take it," he said resolutely, "it's my turn. That's my tub, Baker. You'd better come out of there."

"I'll be out when I've had my bath," was the truculent reply, followed by a sound very much like that caused by a hand descending approvingly on a bare shoulder. Star strode across and rattled the door, but the only response was the gurgling of water as the plug was withdrawn.

"I'll report you to Mr. Gibbs," announced Star loftily. "You're supposed to take your turn. You'd better let me in there."

Just then the door opened and Jimmy came out. Star drew back a step and Dud quickly shot the bolt again. Jimmy smiled sweetly and carelessly at Star. "Don't be a grouch, old man," he said. "There's lots of water yet."

Star fell back on his haughty attitude and observed Jimmy as from Olympian heights. Jimmy chuckled. "Great stuff, Star," he approved. Then he nodded affably to the round-eyed Benson and took himself gracefully from sight. At that moment another cubicle emptied itself of its occupant and Star, swallowing his wrath, absent-mindedly entered it, leaving the two waiting youths to scowl blankly at the closed door. After a moment Benson ejaculated in a careful whisper: *"Hog!"* The other boy nodded agreement. "I thought he and Baker were going to scrap," he confided sotto voce. "Gee,

I wish they had. And I wish Baker had done him up! He's just a big bluff, that's what he is!" From the further cubicle came the sound of song. Dud was regaining his temper.

CHAPTER VI

FIRST PRACTICE

THERE was a large attendance at half-past three that afternoon in the baseball cage. Some forty-odd candidates, most of them last year's first and second team members, had assembled for work, while fully as many others were on hand to watch proceedings. Not that anything very exciting promised, but it was a raw, uncomfortable sort of day outside and fellows were glad of any event that offered a half hour's mild amusement. The cage was not a very ambitious affair, for it had been an after-thought and had been built after the building was erected and at a sacrifice of one of the two bowling alleys, which, thrown into the space formerly occupied by a storeroom, supplied area for a modest cage. It was large enough to throw at base distance in and to hold batting practice in if the batter didn't attempt anything more than a tap. Also, of course, it made an excellent place for the pitchers to limber up.

Dud and Jimmy went over to the gymnasium together, for the latter had finally decided to try his

luck with the first nine. When, having got into his gymnasium suit, Dud looked around for Jimmy, he was rather disconcerted to find himself confronting Starling Meyer across the bench. Dud didn't feel so brave today, and would have been just as satisfied if he hadn't run across the hockey star. But the latter only glared in a haughtily disgusted manner and turned his back, and Dud heaved a sigh of relief, not loud but fervent, and made his way unobtrusively out of the locker-room. He was careful to nod or speak to such fellows as he knew, although lots of times it took a good deal of courage. He was obeying Jimmy's directions, however.

"Don't wait for fellows to speak to you," Jimmy had ordered. "Speak first. Don't act as if you were afraid they wouldn't know you, either. Just say, 'Hello, Smith,' sort of careless-like, or, if you don't know them fairly well, just nod and smile. Don't grin, smile. Like this." And Jimmy turned the corners of his mouth up slightly and nodded his head very briefly. "Get the idea! 'I know who you are, but I don't recall the name.' But don't try that on the big fellows like—well, like Murtha and Trafford and those chaps. You want to be polite to them, sort of cordial, too. Only don't let them think you're trying to swipe."

"Which I am," Dud had interpolated a trifle bitterly.

"Not at all! You're merely being—er—tactful. There's a difference. Tact and diplomacy are great things, Dud. You want to practice 'em."

"Toadying, I call it!"

"Tut, tut! Nothing like it. Call it—call it a studied effort to please!"

"Call it what you like," Dud had replied somberly. "It's poor business."

"Some of our greatest citizens have been diplomats, Dud. Look at me!"

Dud's gaze picked out a number of baseball celebrities whom, under Jimmy's tutelage, he had come to know well enough to speak to. In every case, if he found himself near enough to speak he spoke, or, failing that, he nodded, trying to look quite at his ease and not succeeding very well. Guy Murtha was there, of course, for Guy was this year's captain. He was eighteen, a tall, decidedly plain youth with so many likable qualities that one soon forgot about his features. And Bert Winslow and Nick Blake were talking together further on, and near by were Ben Myatt and Pete Gordon and Nate Leddy. And Hugh Ordway was one of a group the rest of whom Dud knew only by sight. Jimmy appeared from somewhere and about that moment Mr. Sargent, the physical director and baseball coach, came in with Tris Barnes, the manager. Mr. Sargent, or "Pete," as he was called, was

short and square, with a beard and mustache and a pair of restless brown eyes behind the big round lenses of his spectacles. He had a nervous, impatient manner of speaking and was quite likely, to the secret amusement and delight of the fellows, to get his words twisted when the least bit excited.

"All out of the cage, please, but team candidates," was his order. "Close that door, somebody. Better bolt it, Churchill. Now, fellows, if you'll kindly top stalking—ah—stop talking, we'll get started. Captain Murtha, want to say anything?"

"I guess not, sir. There'll be plenty of time to talk later on, won't there? I'd like to say, though, that we're going to need more candidates than are here today and I wish you fellows would try and get others to come out. There's no use waiting until we get outdoors, for this work in the cage is very important and fellows who miss it won't stand much show. Our season begins pretty early this spring, a week earlier than last year, and we haven't any too much time to get in shape. I'd like mighty well to see fully twenty more fellows here tomorrow."

"Yes, yes; this is a very poor showing," agreed Mr. Sargent. "Well, we'll make a start, fellows. We're going to have setting-up work this afternoon and for a few days. How's that, Barnes? No, no dumb-bells today, thanks. Just get in line,

fellows, will you? About four rows will do. That's it. Now then, follow me, please. And keep your mind on what you're doing. One, two, three, four! Stretch the arms out as far as they'll go. All right. Now the wrists; twist! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—keep it up! All right!"

It soon became tiresome to Dud, for he hadn't been in training and the gymnasium work twice weekly had not been strenuous. It was, he reflected, rather remarkable to find so many muscles that creaked in unsuspected places! Almost in front of him, in the second row, Star Meyer was going through the evolutions easily and gracefully and untiringly, and with something of his usual haughty disdain for anything not of his own devising. In gymnasium shirt and trunks Star showed strong and muscular, and Dud felt a warm satisfaction over the fact that he and Star had not come to blows that morning in the bathroom! Star's legs were things to admire as the muscles played over them like whip-cords and Dud wished that he had paid a little more attention to his physical condition during the past year or two. He imagined that his own thin, elongated body must look strangely out of place there with all those other well-conditioned ones. Further along, where he could just be seen out of the corners of Dud's eyes, stood Jimmy, sturdy and stocky, loafing a bit when Mr. Sargent's

gaze was not on him. Dud wanted to loaf, too, but didn't dare.

The calisthenics lasted less than a half-hour, by which time Dud was not the only one breathing hard and perspiring freely, and then Barnes set the candidates' names down. When it was Dud's turn to register Star Meyer was nearly at his elbow, a fact which added to Dud's embarrassment.

"Name?" asked the manager.

"Dudley Baker, Upper Middle."

"Age, Baker?"

"Fifteen."

"Experience?"

"I was on the second nine last year."

"Position?"

"P-pitcher, please."

Someone sniggered. It wasn't Star, for Star never sniggered. It was too low and common. Star only looked insultingly amused. Barnes looked a little amused, too, although he tried not to.

"All right, Baker. Get on the scales and let me know your weight tomorrow. Don't forget, please."

Dud, aware of more than one amused countenance, moved away and sought the locker-room, conscious that his cheeks were very red. Jimmy, already out of his gymnasium togs, noticed and frowned disapprovingly.

"Why the blushes, Dud?" he asked severely.

Dud muttered something evasive and passed on to his locker. But later Jimmy wormed it out of him. Jimmy always could. And Jimmy frowned once more. "We'll have to do something with Star," he said thoughtfully, "something to make him have a little more respect for his betters. I wonder——"

Dud laughed. "I thought wondering was my stunt, Jimmy."

"So it is. I don't wonder, then. I—I merely speculate. Look here, Dud, know what I think?" Dud shook his head hopelessly. "Well, then," Jimmy went on, "I think you'd better have a show-down with Star."

"What sort of a—a show-down?" faltered Dud.

"I mean pick a quarrel with him and fight him. You see, Star has a good deal of influence, and I'm afraid he's been talking. One or two things have reached me, you know. What we'd better do is make an impression on him."

"Thanks!"

"You're not much of a slugger, are you?" Dud shook his head. "No, I suppose not," continued Jimmy thoughtfully. "Well, neither am I, but I guess there are a few tricks I could teach you. Besides, I have a hunch that Star isn't any fonder of scrapping than you are. I wouldn't be a bit sur-

prised if you could bluff him, Dud. Of course, I may be wrong, but that's my idea of him."

"It's a fine idea," said Dud sarcastically, "but suppose you're wrong? Then what?"

"Why, then you'll have to mix it up a bit," replied the other quite cheerfully. "But we won't try it until we've got in shape some. We'd ought to have a couple of pairs of light gloves. Know any fellow who has any, Dud?"

"No, I don't," answered the other emphatically. "And if you think I'm going to stand up to Star Meyer and have him knock me around just to—just to please you, you're horribly mistaken. Nothing doing!"

"To please me! I like that! It isn't to please me, you silly chump; it's for your own good. Star is distinctly—distinctly inimical to your interests, and——"

"Yes, and he'd be distinctly inimical to my nose," interrupted Dud warmly. "And I like my nose the way it is. You may not, but I do. I'm not going to fight him, and that's all there is to it!"

Jimmy was plainly disappointed. "It seems the only way, though, Dud," he said pleadingly. "If you know any better way—— And besides you've got a reputation for slugging to keep up. What will fellows think if you let Star sneer at you and don't call him down?"

"You had no business telling fellows I was a fighter," said Dud. "You didn't consult me about that and I'm not responsible now for what they think. I'm not a fighter and never was and never could be. I don't know anything about it. And—and I don't want to."

Jimmy sighed and shrugged. "You're extremely *difficile,* Dud," he said in a discouraged tone. "I plan things for you——"

"Plan things! I should say you did! You're a bully little planner, Jimmy, but I don't like your plans. Think up something that won't get me killed, please!"

"Piffle! What if Star did give you a black eye? You'd have the credit of putting up a game fight and fellows would like you better. I tell you, Dud, a fellow's got to risk something now and then!"

"You do the risking then," replied the other a trifle sullenly. "I don't want any black eyes, thanks."

"Oh, all right then. Still, we've got to take Star down a peg or two, Dud. But don't you worry. I'll fix my giant intellect on the problem. Leave it all to me, old chap."

"Yes," answered Dud bitterly, "and find myself all beaten up some fine day! Look here, Jimmy, I guess this thing's gone about far enough. Let's drop it now. I—I guess I don't care so much about

being a 'regular feller' as I did. It—it's too plaguey strenuous!"

"Give it up just when we're beginning to show results?" cried Jimmy in amazement. "Never! When I start a thing, Dud, I see it through. That's me, old chap. Having once set my hand to the plow——"

Dud groaned in despair. "Well, then," he muttered, "I wish you'd go off and plow somewhere else!"

"Cheer up, Dud, the dawn is breaking!" Jimmy slapped him encouragingly on the back. "We'll make a regular feller of you yet!"

"That's all well enough, Jimmy, but what I want to know is this. What's Star Meyer going to do when he hears that I'm telling it around school that he's afraid of me? It's a wonder to me that he hasn't heard it already!"

Jimmy winked. "I sort of think he has, Dud," he said softly.

CHAPTER VII

BEN MYATT ADVISES

IF, however, Starling Meyer had heard Jimmy's version of that encounter with Dud, he certainly gave no sign. When he and Dud met, which was frequently now that daily baseball practice was going on in the cage, he either looked over Dud's head or deigned him a fleeting and disdainful glance. But Dud didn't feel at all badly because he received no more attention. In fact, he was extremely glad every time he looked at Star and pondered on that youth's wealth of muscle and length of arm, and he hoped from the bottom of his heart that Star would keep right on treating him with distant disdain—the more distant the better!

Meanwhile Jimmy, being a firm believer in preparedness, had procured two pairs of light-weight boxing gloves from different sources and Dud, much against his inclination, was made to don a pair every day before supper and do his best to master the rudiments of self-defense. I don't believe, just between you and me, that Jimmy knew a whole lot about boxing, but at least he knew more than his

friend did. Dud was the veriest tyro and those first lessons, undertaken by Dud with no relish and one might well say under compulsion, were strange affairs. With the study table drawn back to the length of the green cord connecting droplight and ceiling plug—the droplight met a natural fate during the third lesson—an eight-foot "ring" was secured, and in this, with much thudding of shoes and thumping of gloves, the two feinted and parried and struck. The striking, though, was somewhat one-sided at first, Jimmy being the striker and Dud the strikee, to coin a convenient word. Anyone pausing outside the door of Number 19 might have heard, in spite of the closed transom, a conversation calculated to arouse curiosity.

"Watch your head now! . . . Well, I warned you, didn't I? . . . Keep your right in front of you! Don't drop your arm like that or . . . Now lead! Quick! Oh, put some pep in it, Dud! . . . More like this; see? . . . Feint with your right and come up quick with your left straight for my chin! . . . Get it? Try it again. . . . That's better, only you're too slow. You give it away beforehand. Keep your eyes on mine and don't look where you're going to hit. . . . Sorry, Dud! Was it too hard? . . . You had your guard down, you see. . . . Quicker on your feet, old chap! Keep moving! Don't get set or I'll . . . I just wanted to

show you what would happen, Dud. Don't get mad about it. The only way to learn. . . . Good one! You got me that time! Right on the nose! Bully work! . . ."

After some half-dozen lessons Dud began to learn. And Jimmy, having procured a paper-covered book in the village which was entitled "Boxing Self-Taught," studied it diligently and became more proficient. I doubt that Jimmy, even when at his best, was what might be termed a scientific boxer, and Dud never developed beyond the hammer-and-tongs stage, but they got to fancying themselves quite a bit after a fortnight or so and talked learnedly of "hooks" and "upper-cuts" and "side-stepping" and other mysterious things. And by that time Dud had become really interested and viewed Star Meyer with far less awe. In fact, though I grieve to relate it, he even got to the point where he speculated on what it would feel like to place his fist in violent contact with Star's supercilious nose! The conclusion that he invariably arrived at was that the sensation would be distinctly pleasurable! But much to Jimmy's disappointment —and a little to Dud's, too, I fancy—Star offered the latter no possible excuse for doing such a thing.

"He's afraid of you," grieved Jimmy. "Isn't that the limit? A big, husky chap like him——"

"He," corrected Dud.

"——Being afraid of a fellow six inches smaller," continued the other, superbly disregarding the interruption. "Wouldn't it make you weary? What we've got to do, Dud, is force a quarrel on him. There's no use waiting for him to start anything!"

"Well, but why?" asked Dud doubtfully. "As long as he isn't bothering me——"

"He *is* bothering you! He—he's a thorn in your flesh!"

"Oh!" said the other vaguely. "Is he?"

"Of course he is! He's talking, too. Some of the things he's said have got back to me."

"What?" asked Dud.

"Never mind what. You wouldn't want to hear 'em, I guess."

Dud laughed. "You're making that up, Jimmy," he charged. "You're just dying to get me into a scrap with him. I wouldn't mind—much, although I guess he'd lick me, but I don't see any use in fighting him about nothing. Of course, if he *did* anything, or *said* anything——"

"Haven't I been telling you——"

"And I heard him say it," added Dud hastily, "why, that would be different."

"Oh, if you're going to wait for him to knock you down!"

"I'm not," replied Dud indignantly, "but I can't fight him for nothing at all!"

"Huh!" Jimmy viewed his chum gloomily. "I don't see what use it is then to go to all that trouble to learn to fight if—if you aren't going to make use of—of your knowledge. That's an economical waste, Dud. And waste is sinful."

"It isn't a waste," said Dud. "It's a good thing to know how to defend yourself. Besides, that boxing business has put my arm back in shape for pitching. It feels great nowadays. Just feel of that muscle, Jimmy."

"Not bad," decided the other, grudgingly. Then, more brightly: "Say, you ought to be able to hand Star a peach of a wallop with that, Dud! Well, all we can do is hope for the best. We don't want to fight, but if we have to——"

"We?" queried Dud. "I don't see where you come into it! You're always talking about 'we' fighting Star Meyer, but it's me——"

"I," said Jimmy sweetly.

"It's I, then, who would have to do it. If you want Star licked so plaguey much why don't you do it yourself?"

Jimmy considered a moment. "Well, say, that isn't a bad idea," he replied at last. "Someone ought to do it, that's sure! If you're quite certain you don't mind——"

"I'm dead sure," said Dud emphatically.

"Then maybe——" Jimmy felt of his arm mus-

cles. "I'll think it over," he concluded thoughtfully.

Baseball practice had by this time really become baseball practice. I mean by that that the period of dumb-bell exercises and setting-up drills had passed and the candidates, reënforced by some dozen or so late-comers, were passing and batting and learning the tricks of the game. The battery candidates comprised Nate Leddy, Ben Myatt, Gus Weston, Will Brunswick, Joe Kelly and Dud Baker, pitchers, and Pete Gordon, Hal Cherry and Ed Brooks, catchers. Of the pitchers, Myatt was last year's star and a clever twirler, Leddy was a good man but not so dependable. Weston had speed but little control, and the others were still unknown quantities, except that both Kelly and Dud had twirled a few times for the second nine the spring before. Pete Gordon was the regular catcher and Brooks the second-choice man. Cherry was a beginner who showed promise. At the end of the first two weeks of indoor work, the battery candidates were given their first try-out one afternoon at the conclusion of the regular practice, and Dud, somewhat to his surprise, survived. Still, as Jimmy kindly pointed out to him later, that didn't mean much since it was the custom to keep all the would-be pitchers until the team got out of doors. Nevertheless, Dud was encouraged and did his level best

to make good. Myatt, a big, likable chap of eighteen or over, took a real interest in the efforts of the younger members of the staff and was generous with advice and instruction. One afternoon, shortly before the candidates got out-doors for the first time, he took Dud in hand after practice.

"Say, Baker," Ben called as Dud was leaving the cage, "got time to pitch me a few?"

Dud, pulling his glove off, turned back. "Why, yes," he answered. "Want me to?"

"Yes. Yell to Ed Brooks to lend me his mitt, will you?" A minute later Ben took his place in front of the net and thumped the big mitten encouragingly. "All right now, boy! Try a few easy ones. That's nice. I say, Baker, mind if I give you a hint or two?"

"I'd be awfully glad if you would," replied Dud eagerly. "I know I'm not much good."

"Who says so?"

"I do." Dud smiled.

But Ben shook his head reprovingly. "You ought to be the last one to say it," he announced gravely. "First thing you want to do, boy, is stop tying yourself in a knot on your wind-up. You'll never last nine innings if you go through all that gymnastic stuff. What's the big idea?"

"I don't know," faltered Dud. "That's the way I've always done it, I suppose."

"Well, I wouldn't do it any more. You see if you can't reach the toe-plate without going through so many motions. Cut out that second swing of yours, why don't you? Here's you." Ben went through an exaggerated imitation of Dud's wind-up. "Too much work, see? If you had a man on second, now, you couldn't do half that, boy; he'd be sliding into the plate before you were through. Get your body into it and stop throwing your arm around. It's the body that puts the speed into the ball. You want to start easy and work up gradually until, when the ball leaves your hand, you're at the top of the pitch. The way you do it, Baker, you get a lot of motion up and then lose it before you pitch. And you tire yourself a lot. I couldn't last five innings if I threw my arms around like that. I hope you don't mind my criticizing you, Baker."

Dud didn't, and tried to say so, but his response was not much more than a murmur. However, Ben went on cheerfully.

"Just at first you won't have the control you have now, I guess, but after you've got on to the hang of it you'll find you can pitch a lot easier. Just try it, will you?"

Dud's first attempt was a complete failure, for he started unthinkingly on that second swing, tried to stop it and got so confused that he didn't even let the ball out of his hand. Ben suggested getting

used to the wind-up before trying to pitch, and so Dud twirled and twisted a number of times, uncomfortably conscious of the few loiterers watching through the netting, and finally got so that he was able to reach the moment of delivery without falling over his feet. But when he tried to pitch a few straight balls into Ben Myatt's mitten he discovered that the change in his method had seemingly spoiled his direction, for more than once Ben had to reach for a wide one or else scoop one off the floor.

"Don't worry about that," said Ben. "You'll get your eye back again. That's enough for now, I guess. There's one more thing I'd suggest, though, Baker. You're trying to pitch too many different things. You were hooking them in and out and dropping them and trying to float 'em, too. You don't need all that, boy. Not yet, anyhow. You take my advice and learn to pitch a good straight ball. Get so you can send it high, low, in or out or right in the groove. Then learn to change your pace without giving it away to the batsman. After that there's plenty of time for drops and hooks. I tell you, Baker, the fellow that has control is the fellow the batters hate to stand up to. This thing of having fifty-seven varieties of balls doesn't cut much ice, old man." Ben opened the door and gently pushed Dud out ahead of him and they went across to the locker-room. "A chap who can tease the

batter with the straight ones, slip one across for a strike now and then, follow a fast one with a slow one and do it all without changing his style is the fellow who wins his games. I'm not saying hooks and floaters and all those aren't useful, for they are, but I do say that when a fellow's beginning he ought to pin his faith to just one thing, and that's control. Don't be worried if they hit you hard at first; they're bound to; but just keep on learning to put 'em where you want to, and the first thing you know you'll be fooling them worse than the curve artist. Practice that new wind-up, boy, and cut out all the unnecessary gee-gaws that just use up your strength. Nine innings is a whole month sometimes and it's the very dickens to feel your muscles getting sore along about the sixth. So long, Baker. Good luck."

Dud thought it over while he stood under the shower and while he pulled on his clothes. Maybe Ben Myatt was right, he reflected, but he was a bit proud of his ability to "put something on the ball" and confining himself to straight ones didn't sound interesting. For a moment he wondered if Ben was trying to steer him away from his hooks and drops so that he wouldn't prove a rival. Then the absurdity of that suspicion dawned and he smiled at it. In the first place, Ben wouldn't be in school another year, and in the second place Dud

was certain that he would never be able to pitch as Ben could if he kept at it all his life! In the end, by which time he was tying his scarf in front of one of the little mirrors, he decided that Ben's advice was excellent and that he would follow it, for a while at least.

The next afternoon, Hal Cherry, catching Dud and Kelly, looked a trifle surprised and a bit disgusted, too, when Dud's delivery suddenly exhibited a strange eccentricity. Cherry had to spear the air in all directions that day, and Mr. Sargent, watching and counseling the fellows, followed Dud's doings with dubious eyes. Nor was Dud perceptibly more steady the day following, and Brooks, who caught him, protested more than once. By that time Dud was getting discouraged and was strongly tempted to go back to his former more elaborate and far more labored wind-up, and would have done so probably had it not been for Ben Myatt's brief encouragement after practice.

"Haven't got the hang of it yet, I see, Baker," remarked the veteran. "Keep on, though. It'll come to you in another day or two, I guess. Try not to slow up just before your pitch, boy. That's your trouble now."

Pondering that hint, Dud hauled Jimmy out of bed early the next morning and conducted him out back of the dormitory, where, stationed midway be-

tween two windows, he made cheerful efforts to get his hands on the balls that Dud pitched him. Many of them, however, bounded unchallenged from the bricks and trickled back to Dud. One particularly wild heave came so near a window that Dud shivered, pocketed the ball and led the way back to the room.

"If," said Jimmy disgustedly, on the way, "that's a sample of what you can do with this simplified wind-up you're telling about you'd better go back to the old stuff. There's nothing in it, Dud!"

"I'm going to stick it out a bit longer, though," was the answer. "Ben says it will take time, Jimmy."

"Yes, and patience," said Jimmy sarcastically, "the catcher supplying the patience. After you've 'beaned' a few batters, Dud, they'll put you in jail as a danger to the community. I'm glad I don't have to stand up to you!"

Two days after that, March having departed very lamb-like, the cage was abandoned and outdoor practice began.

CHAPTER VIII

A WILD PITCH

APRIL at its best is an uncertain month, and April this spring lived up to its reputation. No sooner had the baseball candidates grown accustomed to the feel of soft and springy turf under their feet than a three-days' rain began and they were forced to retire again to the dim and unsympathetic cage. The track and field candidates defied weather conditions until the cinders held pools of water and the pits became of the consistency of oatmeal porridge. Then the sun shone forth again and, after another day of indoor confinement, the players once more trailed down to Lothrop Field. The diamond was far from dry, but the sun was warm and a little south-east breeze promised its best efforts. Candidates for the second team were called out that afternoon, and Jimmy, whose status with the first was still a matter for conjecture, thought seriously of returning to the fold. Dud, however, refused to sanction the step and so Jimmy grumblingly stayed where he was.

"I know just how it'll be, though," he said pessi-

mistically. "They'll keep me here until Crowley's got his second team all made up and then they'll drop me. Oh, all right!" He stretched his legs and leaned more comfortably back against the railing of the stand. "After all, it's too nice a day to do anything. I pity those poor dubs out there catching flies and wrenching their arms throwing the ball in. Me for the quiet, untroubled life of a substitute outfielder. You'll have to go in and pitch pretty quick, Dud; Pete's got his eye on you now; but I'll just sit here and keep this bench warm and——"

Jimmy's remarks were rudely interrupted.

"Hi, Logan!" called Mr. Sargent. "Go on out there to left and get your hands on some of those flies. Lively, now! Send Boynton in."

Jimmy arose with alacrity, casting a despairing glance at Dud, and ambled off. Hugh Ordway, seated further along the bench, got up and joined Dud.

"Awfully pretty, isn't it?" observed Hugh, nodding toward the wide expanse of new green that led away to the ribbon of river beyond. "Reminds me a lot of home—I mean England." It sounded as if he was correcting himself, and Dud asked:

"But England is your home, isn't it?"

Hugh nodded. "I suppose it is, only when I'm here I like to remember that I'm part American, if you know what I mean."

"Your mother is American, isn't she?" asked Dud.

"Yes, she was born in Maryland. Her folks have lived there for a long time. It's a bit odd, Baker, but sometimes I feel as if I were more U. S. A. than British. Being sort of half-and-half like that, a fellow doesn't quite know where he is, if you know what I mean!"

"I dare say," murmured Dud. It was the first time that Hugh Ordway had ever approached him, and he felt rather embarrassed. The desire to make a good impression on the other only resulted in tying his tongue up. But Hugh appeared not to notice the fact.

"How are you getting on," he asked, "with your bowl—your pitching?"

"Just fair, I guess. How do you like it? Baseball, I mean."

"Crazy about it! I'll never learn to play decently, I fancy, but it's a jolly game, isn't it? What I like best is batting, only I can't seem to hit the ball very well yet. Myatt fools me every time, you know. I got a couple of good ones off Nate Leddy the other day, though. Are you pitching today?"

"I guess Pete will put me in for an inning or two later. He's giving us all a chance now. I—I'm pretty rotten so far."

"Haven't found yourself yet, I fancy. It takes a

bit of time, eh? Bert says a lot of us will be dropped to the second pretty soon. I say, Baker, I wasn't thinking of you, you know!"

"Oh, I'll get dropped, all right, I guess."

"Hope not, I'm sure. In my own case I wouldn't mind a bit. Maybe I could play well enough to make the second. Or a class team perhaps."

"I thought you—you fielded very well the other day," said Dud politely.

Hugh laughed. "You're spoofing, I fancy. I did catch a few, but I was beastly scared of them. Bert says I looked as if I were going to catch them in my mouth! Odd feeling you have when those balls begin to come down, getting bigger and bigger every second, and you're wondering whether you'll catch them or if they'll hit you on the nose! Jolly good fun, though! Corking! Lots more exciting than cricket."

"Is it? I never played cricket."

"Oh, no end! Cricket's a bully good game, too, but it's a lot more quiet and—er—sedate, if you know what I mean. Well, I'll toddle. Hope you get on finely, Baker. And drop in some time, eh?"

"Thanks," answered Dud. Then, as Hugh moved away, he blurted: "Did you really mean that, Ordway?"

"What? Why, of course!"

"Then—then I will. I didn't know——" Dud's

voice trailed off into silence as he dropped an embarrassed gaze. Hugh smiled and nodded.

"Right-o, Baker! Glad to have you."

Dud, wishing he hadn't made such a fool of himself, bent stern attention on his glove until the red had subsided from his cheeks. "He will think me an awful kid," he reflected. "Asking things like that and—and blushing like a silly girl! And of course he couldn't say anything else. You won't catch me going!"

Further self-communing was cut short by Mr. Sargent. "All right, Baker," called the coach. "Warm up, will you? Brooks will catch you. See if you can't steady down today."

Dud squirmed out of his sweater, pulled his glove on and joined Ed Brooks in front of the first-base stand. Brunswick had taken Kelly's place in the box and it would be Dud's turn next. As Brooks tossed the ball to him and spread his hands invitingly wide apart Dud hoped hard that he would be able to steady down, but doubted it. As yet the recollection of that impulsive question to Ordway still made his face burn. Consequently when, after pitching a half-dozen easy ones to warm his arm, he began to put on a little speed, he was pleased as well as surprised to find that some of his old control had come back. Encouraged, he made greater efforts to put the ball where he wanted to and, un-

consciously, began to "steam up." But Brooks cautioned him and Dud slowed down.

"That's pitching 'em," called Brooks. "They're all straight, though, Dud, or pretty near it. Try a slant."

But Dud resisted the temptation to "hook" one and shook his head. Instead, he sent over a slow one that fooled Brooks completely and brought from the latter a laugh at his own expense. "Do it again," he urged, as he threw the ball back. "I want to get used to those."

"I'll wait until you're not expecting it," laughed Dud.

There was no line-up today, but first and second-string players were batting and running the bases, taking their places in the field ultimately to let others come in. Weston, Kelly and Brunswick had held the mound for an inning or two apiece, while Ben Myatt and Nate Leddy were trying to improve their hitting, a thing that the latter was rather weak at. Presently the outfielders were called in in a body and others took their places, and changes were made in the infield. Brunswick went to the shower and Dud to the pitcher's box. Pete Gordon was still catching.

"All right, Baker!" called Pete. "Strike 'em out, boy. Put her over now."

Neil Ayer fouled one and then landed on the next and went to first, and Bert Winslow took his

place. The pitchers were not expected to work hard, for a batsman stayed in until he hit or was caught out. Bert was difficult to dispose of, since he cannily refused everything that wasn't distinctly a strike, and Dud pitched a dozen deliveries before Bert found one he liked and rapped it to deep center. Meanwhile Mr. Sargent was coaching Ayer from first to second and on to third, making him slide to every base even though he was not threatened. When, however, he tried to steal home on Dud's wind-up, Dud managed to keep his head, send in a fast one and saw Ayer nailed a yard from the rubber.

It wasn't especially interesting work and some of the hits were screechers into deep right, left or center that the outfielders couldn't begin to get their hands onto. Dud had not had much experience in fielding his position and was momentarily in fear that a hot liner would come at his head. If one did, he was quite certain he would duck and quite disgrace himself. But when, after some nine or ten batters had faced him, Captain Murtha hit one squarely on the nose and it came straight at Dud, the latter involuntarily put up his hands and, while he didn't make the catch, knocked it down, recovered it and tossed out Murtha at first. He got a round of applause from the stand for that, which so rattled him that his next delivery shot past Gor-

don a good four feet to his right and let in a runner from third. The batter sent the next one off on a voyage to deep center and took two bases. The base-runners were taking such extraordinary chances and Mr. Sargent was making such a hullabaloo back of first that Dud began to lose his control badly, and he was forced to put exactly eleven balls across before Weston, tired of waiting for a good one, reached for a wide ball and fouled out to first-baseman.

Then Star Meyer faced him and Dud made up his mind to make Star work for his hit. Star viewed the pitcher with amused contempt and Dud felt his cheeks tingle. But he set his teeth and sent a high one across that the batter disdained and followed it with one that barely cut the inner corner of the plate and was just knee-high. Star looked doubtful about it, but Gordon proclaimed it "a daisy, Star! They don't come any better." That apparently impressed Star, for he swung hard at the succeeding delivery, which, happening to be one of Dud's slow ones, crossed the plate almost a second after the swing! Someone laughed and Star frowned haughtily. Dud tempted him with another wide one and then sneaked one across right in the groove and caught the batter napping. Gordon thumped the ball into his glove before he threw it back, a signal of commendation with the big catcher.

"That's the stuff, Baker!" he called. "That's pitching 'em, boy!"

Dud tried another slow one and again Star swung too soon and again a laugh greeted the performance. This time, with the ripple of laughter, came a smatter of applause from the handful of spectators on the stand. Star's countenance lost its haughtiness and his mouth set grimly. Dud decided that he might as well let Star hit and get rid of him, and so he tried to put one over shoulder-high and across the middle of the plate. But something went wrong. Dud was convinced afterwards that his foot had turned on a pebble. At all events, instead of traveling straight and true into Gordon's waiting mitt, the ball took an erratic slant and brought up against Star's shoulder. There was speed on the ball and the batter had scarcely tried to dodge it, and now he dropped his bat, clapped a hand to his shoulder and performed a series of most unconventional steps about the plate. Dud started toward him, but Gordon was already at his side and so Dud contented himself with a sincere "Awfully sorry, Meyer!"

But Star, impatiently throwing off the catcher's hand, turned an angry countenance to Dud. "You meant to do that, Baker! You did it on purpose. I'll get you for it, too! You can't——"

But Mr. Sargent interposed then. "Tut, tut,

Meyer! It was purely an accident. You must learn to get out of the way of them. Sorry if it hurt you, though. Get Davy to rub it for you. That'll do for today."

Star, pausing to cast a final ominous look at Dud, recovered his poise and, rubbing his injury, retired haughtily. Many amused glances followed him, for no one there doubted that it had been purely accidental and Star's loss of temper had struck them as unnecessary. The incident ended Dud's usefulness for that day, for his delivery became so wild that Mr. Sargent quickly took him out, putting in Weston to finish the practice.

Dud, yielding the ball shamefacedly, retired to the bench and donned his sweater. He was quite aware of the fact that Mr. Sargent meant him to return to the Field House, but the thought of the irate Star Meyer, who, by the time Dud got there, would doubtless be just getting into his clothes, deterred him. Instead, then, of leaving the field, Dud found a place on the bench and pretended deep absorption in the practice. Presently, though, a better idea presented itself. Across on the other diamond the second was putting in its first day of work under the tuition of "Dinny," as Mr. Crowley, the assistant physical director, was called. He would, he decided, wander over there as unostentatiously as possible, and so escape Mr. Sargent's eagle eye. But

it proved a mistaken move, for just at the moment that Dud detached himself from the few idlers on the bench, Mr. Sargent happened to look across the diamond, and his impatient voice quickly followed his glance.

"Baker! Go ahead in! I told you once!"

The fellows on the bench grinned and Dud tried his best to make it appear that he wanted nothing better in life than to do that very thing! But, just the same, once behind the stand and out of view of those on the diamond, his feet moved very slowly along the path. I don't believe that Dud was a coward, for one may have no stomach for physical combat and yet be brave enough in other ways, but I am quite certain that he wished heartily all the way across to the Field House that the tall and dignified form of Star Meyer would appear at the doorway and proceed homeward before he reached there! But nothing of the sort happened, and when Dud entered the locker-room he was just in time to hear Star finish an account of the recent episode for the benefit of three boys who lolled on the benches in various stages of undress.

"He was afraid to give me one I could hit and so he whanged one straight at me. I wasn't looking for it and couldn't get out of the way, and it got me right on the shoulder. He threw it as hard as he could, too, and that arm will be out of commission

for days. Pete had the cheek to tell me that it was an accident! Accident! Yes, it was—not! You wait till I get a chance at that fresh kid!"

CHAPTER IX

JIMMY TAKES CHARGE

DUD'S first impulse was to turn back, but one of Star's audience had seen him already, and so, after a moment of hesitation, he went on and, since Star had his back toward the door, reached his locker before the speaker saw him. Then there was an instant's silence. Dud pulled open the locker door, took his towel out and dropped it on the bench. Then:

"Got canned, did you?" asked Star. "Maybe you'll learn after a while that you can't do that sort of thing and get away with it."

"I didn't mean to hit you, Meyer, honestly," returned Dud. "I—I'm awfully sorry. There was a pebble or something——"

"Oh, forget your pebbles! You know very well you meant to hit me. You've been doing a lot of talking around school lately. I've heard it. And I'd have given you a mighty good spanking if you'd been big enough to notice." Star had walked around the end of the bench and now faced Dud like an outraged Jove from a yard away. Dud tried hard to

appear undisturbed, but the mere publicity was enough to send the blood into his cheeks and put a tremor in his voice as he answered.

"I haven't been talking about you, Meyer," he said as stoutly as he could. "And, anyhow, you needn't try to bully me. I've apologized for that—that accident, and that's all I can do."

"Oh, you apologize, do you?" Star laughed amusedly. "Well, apologies don't answer, kid. If you weren't so small I'd kick you around the room, you—you ugly-faced little insect!"

"Never mind my size!" cried Dud, throwing discretion to the winds in the sudden flare of anger. "And never mind about my looks, either! Any time you want to start kicking you go ahead, Meyer! I'm not afraid of you! You're a bluff, a big bluff, that's all you——"

Star's right hand shot out suddenly and the open palm landed hard on Dud's cheek. The blow sent him sprawling across the bench, but he was on his feet again in an instant, his face white save where the impact of Star's hand had left a tingling red stain. Star, smiling crookedly, had stepped back, ready for Dud's rush. But the rush wasn't made, for at that instant "Davy" Richards' voice came sternly from the doorway.

"Here, boys! Stop that! Look you, Meyer, leave him alone! What mean you hitting a boy be-

neath your size, eh?" Davy was Welsh and when excited relapsed into a brogue as broad as it was difficult of reproduction in type. Star looked around, shrugged his shoulders and laughed lightly.

"I wasn't hitting him, Davy. I merely slapped his face for him. If I ever really hit him he'd know it!"

"Well, no more of it in this house! 'Tis no place for fighting. And you there, you, Baker, behave yourself, do you hear me? No more now or I'll take a hand myself!" Davy retired grumbling, and one of the audience of three chuckled as he got up and sauntered out. The others exchanged glances of amusement and went on with their dressing. Star nonchalantly retired to his own bench, leaving Dud standing with clenched fists and angry face in the middle of the floor, for once unconscious of the curious gazes of others.

"It isn't finished yet, Meyer," he said at last in a low voice.

Star glanced up contemptuously. "You'll be finished if you try any more funny stunts with me, Baker," he said threateningly. "And I want you to stop talking about me, too. Hear that? The next time I'll do a lot more than slap your ugly face for you!"

"You'll fight me!"

"I wouldn't bother to!" Star laughed. "I might break you in two if I hit you!"

"You'll fight me," reiterated Dud doggedly. "If you won't——"

He stopped, for Davy was glowering at him from the doorway.

"Look you, Baker, what I say I mean! One more word about fighting while you're in this place and out you go!"

Dud subsided and silence reigned until the door opened to admit a number of released second team candidates, by which time Dud was ready for his shower. When he returned to the lockers Star had gone. By that time the room was crowded from end to end, for practice was over and some forty-odd boys were struggling for space. Jimmy spied his chum and pushed his way to him.

"Oh, Dud, it was fine!" he whispered delightedly. "Only why didn't you put it a foot or so higher and 'bean' him? Did you see him again?"

Dud nodded.

"Was he mad?" demanded Jimmy eagerly. "Hello, what are you looking so funny about? You didn't—I say, Dud, you two didn't——" He paused expressively.

"We had words," replied Dud in low tones, "and he—slapped my face."

"Slapped——" Jimmy whistled. Then: "Great

stuff, Dud! What did you do? Where were you? I wish I'd seen it!"

"I didn't do anything. Davy butted in. I'm going to fight him, though."

"Of course! Slapped your face, eh, the big bully? That—that's a fighting matter, Dud. When are you going to do it?"

"He refused; said he wouldn't bother with me; said he might break me in two! But he's got to fight, Jimmy!"

"You bet he has!" agreed Jimmy enthusiastically. "But listen: let me get my shower. You wait for me, will you? We've got to talk this over, you know."

"There isn't anything to talk over," said Dud flatly. "He's got to fight me."

"Yes, but if he says he won't—— You wait for me, see? I won't be a minute." And Jimmy, beaming broadly, dashed off.

Dud found a corner by the door and waited, listening idly to the chatter of the fellows. Nearby Foster Tray, struggling with a stubborn shirt, remarked in smothered tones:

"Did you see Baker peg Star in the arm, Mil? It was a fierce old biff!"

"Yes," replied Oscar Milford, "and Star was hopping mad." He chuckled. "Said Baker did it on purpose. Well, maybe he did. I don't know.

But they say Baker's got Star scared of him, for some reason."

"Oh, piffle! A kid like that? Not likely! But it isn't sense getting mad about being hit with a ball. Gee, if I got peeved every time I got whacked last year——"

A good-natured altercation over the possession of a bath towel that both Leddy and Parker laid claim to drowned the rest of Tray's remark and Dud slipped further along. Captain Murtha ran across him a moment later and stopped an instant.

"Say, Baker, you did mighty well there for a while today. Keep it up, old man. But don't lay out any more of the team, eh? You might leave us short-handed!" Guy laughed, nodded and went on, and presently, showing numerous evidences of having dressed hurriedly, Jimmy arrived a bit breathless and dragged Dud outside. There, one arm through Dud's, he led the way back to the dormitory.

"Now," he demanded eagerly, "let's have the whole story."

"Well, I stepped on a pebble or something and the ball got away and hit Star on the shoulder."

"Yes," chuckled Jimmy, "I saw that. Something ought to be done about those pebbles!" And he winked meaningly.

"But it was a pebble!" declared Dud. "I didn't mean to hit him!"

"You didn't!" Jimmy was incredulous, incredulous and disappointed. "Gee, I thought of course you did it so he'd get mad and fight! Are you sure?"

"Yes, I am," answered Dud shortly. "Don't be a fool, Jimmy."

"Oh, all right, then. It was an accident." Jimmy sighed. "Then what?"

Dud brought the narrative to its conclusion by the time they were crossing the campus, and Jimmy disengaged his arm in order to slap Dud approvingly on the back. "Fine!" he declared. "Just what we wanted! By the time we put this thing through, Dud, you'll be the most talked-of fellow in school!"

"I don't want to be talked of. I'm sick of all that rot. All I want is to show Star Meyer that he can't slap me and—and get away with it!"

"Sure! But it'll do you a lot of good if you lick him, don't you see? Fellows will call you a plucky kid and all that. Oh, there's nothing to it, Dud! Here's where we make good, old son!"

"I'm not likely to lick him," replied the other quietly. "I dare say he will beat me to a pulp, but he won't do it before I've got in a few," he added grimly.

"That's all right, too, but it's going to make a lot bigger hit if you get the decision," responded Jimmy. "No, you'd better make up your mind to lick him, Dud."

"Make up my mind!" replied the other impatiently as they traveled together down the corridor. "How's making up my mind going to help? He can lick me, and you know it. And I know it. What's the good of talking rot like that?"

"How do you know he can?" asked Jimmy eagerly. "I'll bet you anything Star's got a yellow streak in him somewhere. And you've been learning right along, haven't you? Why, say, I call you a mighty clever boxer right this minute, Dud! Yes, I do, honest! And—I say, what time is it? Fine! We've just got time to put on the gloves for a few minutes. I was reading in that book——"

"I'm not going to put on the gloves," answered Dud decidedly. "I'll fight him just as I am. All that scientific stuff isn't much good, anyway. It didn't keep him from almost knocking me flat on the floor this afternoon, did it?"

"But you weren't looking for it! If you'd known——"

"Besides, the thing is to get him to fight. He says he won't. How can I make him, Jimmy?"

"We-ell——" Jimmy studied the question with his head on one side and his mouth pursed. At last:

"There are two or three ways, I guess. You might challenge him publicly or you might just walk up and slap his face the way he slapped yours or you might——"

"That's good enough," interrupted Dud. "Come on!"

"Hold on! Where are you going?"

"To find him!"

"Well, but—but wait! Hold on! See here, Dud, you can't walk into a fellow's room and biff him, you know!"

"Why can't I?"

"Because it isn't done, old chap. Violation of—er—hospitality and all that, you know. What you want to do is to find him some time when other fellows are around, see? Then he can't possibly refuse. But you want to make sure that a faculty isn't looking! Better wait now until morning and get him in School Hall; in the corridor, say. Yes, that's the idea. There'll be a crowd around, and——"

"I'd rather do it now," said Dud. "Maybe—by tomorrow—I might not—might not want to so much!"

"Oh, that's all right. I'll keep you up to it, son. Trust me. You see, Dud, this is a wonderful opportunity and we want to make the most of it. You wait until the morning and then find Star in the corridor between recitations. There's bound to be a

crowd there. Imagine the sensation when you step up to him and let him have it right on the cheek! Maybe you'd ought to say something, too, something —er—effective. Let's see now. Suppose——"

"Look here, Jimmy, this isn't any silly pageant! I don't care whether anyone's around or not. All you think about is making a public show of it! You make me tired!"

"Nothing of the sort," returned Jimmy indignantly. "All I say is that if you're going to do it you ought to do it right! What's the good of balling it all up when, by using a little—er—a little headwork, you can make a great big hit? No, sir, you listen to me. I'm managing you in this affair, Dud. Just you sit still and leave the whole business to me."

"Leave it to you——" began Dud bitterly.

"Besides, I've got a better scheme, old chap! Let's do it shipshape, eh? After supper I'll call on Star and take your challenge to him. Then, if he says he won't fight, we'll go ahead with the public insult scheme. But that will be giving him a chance to accept like a gentleman. And, of course, whether he accepts or doesn't, the thing is just bound to leak out." Jimmy grinned. "Those things always do."

"I wish," said Dud moodily, "I'd kept my mouth shut and not told you anything about it. You're bound to go and hire a brass band and make a

hullabaloo! I dare say"—sarcastically—"you'll be selling tickets for the fight!"

"By Jove, that isn't a bad idea! I don't mean to sell tickets, but we might issue invitations or—or something. 'You are cordially invited to be present at an informal scrap between Dudley Baker and Starling Meyer at five-thirty on Friday. R. S. V. P.'"

"I wish you'd quit making a silly joke of it," complained Dud. "If you think it's so terribly funny, why don't you fight him yourself?"

"I would in a minute if he slapped my face," replied Jimmy promptly. "Maybe he will when I take the challenge to him. Gee, I wish he'd try it! Still, I suppose you'd claim the right to the first scrap. Well, that's settled, then. Come on to supper now. Better be sort of careful what you eat, you know. You want to keep in condition. What do you say to tomorrow afternoon before supper down at the Beach? We'd be out of sight there and it would be handy for fellows to get to after practice. No use staging the affair too far away if we want a good attendance, eh? Got to consider folks' comfort some, you know. All ready?"

CHAPTER X

THE CHALLENGE

"COME in!"

Starling Meyer turned from the window in Number 17 and faced the door. Ernest Barnes, Star's roommate, looked up from his book and glanced curiously in the same direction as the portal opened briskly to admit Jimmy Logan. It lacked but a few minutes of study hour and Jimmy, with the door of the next room slightly ajar, had made certain of Star's return before starting on his errand. Beyond the partition—there was a connecting door between the rooms, but that was never opened—Dud was dubiously awaiting Jimmy's report.

"Oh," said Star eloquently as Jimmy advanced jauntily enough but with a most sober countenance into the radius of light from the study table. "Hello, Logan, what do you want?"

Barnes' greeting was just a nod, civil but not enthusiastic, and having made it he went back to his book.

"Hello, fellows," said Jimmy. "Mind if I sit down, Meyer?"

"Help yourself." Star eyed the caller suspiciously. "This is an unexpected honor," he added sarcastically.

Jimmy nodded. "Yes, isn't it? Fact is, I'm on a painful errand, Meyer. Mind if I speak before Barnes?"

"Oh, cut the comedy, Logan," replied Star impatiently. "What nonsense are you up to, anyway?"

"No nonsense at all, really," Jimmy assured him earnestly. "It's like this, Meyer. I'm here on behalf of my friend, Baker. You see, he isn't just satisfied with the way things were left this afternoon. He feels that—er—the matter ought to be settled more—er—more definitely. See what I mean?"

"Oh, rot! I'm not going to fight that kid, Logan. He's too small. Tell him to forget it. And look here, you!" Star's voice took on an edge. "I want you to quit meddling in my affairs, too, Logan. I know what you've been up to. You and that roommate of yours are altogether too fresh."

"Me?" asked Jimmy innocently. "What have I done, Meyer?"

"You've talked a whole lot too much, that's what you've done. And you've egged Baker on to—to make trouble. I want you to stop it, both of you."

"Well, I may have talked some," Jimmy allowed calmly. "Everyone has a right to talk——"

"If they're careful what they say, yes! But——"

"Anyway, that isn't what I came to see you about. I've talked it over with Dud and we've concluded that you ought to give him satisfaction. You see, Meyer, slapping a fellow's face and then refusing to go on with it looks—well, a bit funny, eh? Now what we propose is that you and Dud meet, say tomorrow afternoon at half-past five, down at the Beach, and settle the matter in a quiet, gentlemanly way. What do you say to that?"

"I say no," replied Star shortly. "I haven't any intention of fighting him. All I will do is slap his face again if he doesn't let me alone. He's been telling it around—or you have—that I'm afraid of him!"

"Um," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "Well—er—if you don't fight him won't it look as if he was right?"

Star flushed angrily. "Don't be a fool, Logan! I'd take the two of you on and lick the tar out of you if it wasn't beneath me!"

"Oh, I see! Then I'm to tell Dud that you refuse?"

"Tell him anything you like! And now you get out of here or I'll throw you out!"

Barnes had displayed a remarkable aloofness up

to the present moment, but now he raised his eyes at last from his book and judicially, even hopefully, compared the two before him. The result of the comparison, however, seemed to disappoint him, for he sighed and went back to his occupation again, apparently dismissing the matter from his mind.

"And what would I be doing?" asked Jimmy brightly. "I'll tell you frankly, Meyer, that your attitude is a great surprise to me. It's a great disappointment, too. I'd hoped for better things, Meyer. The fellows are going to be mightily disappointed when they hear about it."

"So you intend to talk some more, do you?" demanded the other exasperatedly.

"Me? Oh, my, no! But these things have a way of getting out, you know, Meyer." Jimmy shook his head sadly. "This school is a frightfully gossipy little community." He got up and turned toward the door. "If you think better of it, all you've got to do is just let me know. I wish you'd think it over, Meyer."

"You get out of here!" retorted Star threateningly.

"I'm going. I don't know what Dud will say, though, when I tell him!"

"I fancy," sneered Star, "that he will be a good bit relieved!"

"Dud? Oh, dear, no!" responded Jimmy gently. "He's awfully keen about it, Dud is. It'll be a horrible disappointment to him, Meyer. Well, so long."

Jimmy passed out with melancholy mien, closing the door softly behind him and then pausing an instant to chuckle before he opened the next portal. A moment later his expression of wicked glee changed to one of utmost decorum, for to his surprise he found that Dud had a visitor and that the visitor was none other than Mr. Russell. Mr. Russell, better known as "J. P.," was the Greek instructor and one of the house masters in Trow. Jimmy said "Good evening, sir," in the most deferential tones, shot a quick, inquiring glance at Dud and then paused uncertainly.

"Am I in the way, Mr. Russell?" he asked.

"Not at all, Logan. I've finished my business with Baker. Possibly I'd better acquaint you with it and enlist your assistance." Mr. Russell smiled gently. "We've heard that Baker had a quarrel this afternoon with another boy and was heard to threaten him. As you know, both of you, fighting is not tolerated here, and I felt it my duty to drop in and warn Baker against—ah—any infringement of the rules. He has explained the circumstances and I must acknowledge that he has grounds for—ah—complaint. But the matter must be settled

amicably, boys, and I shall depend on you, Logan, as an older boy, to see that your friend here does nothing he will be sorry for. Personally, I believe that there is something to be said for—ah—a physical encounter under such circumstances, but rules are rules and we are here to obey them. You agree with me, Logan?"

"Absolutely, sir," replied Jimmy emphatically.

"Then I may depend on you to see that nothing occurs which—ah——"

"You may, sir," said Jimmy resolutely. "In fact, I've already been talking it over with Dud, Mr. Russell, and I'm certain he doesn't intend to make any trouble. You see, just at first he was a bit peeved. Any fellow would have been if another fellow had slapped his face like that. But after I'd talked to him a while——"

Jimmy paused because Dud was grinning and Mr. Russell had emitted what was an unmistakable chuckle.

"I'm afraid, Logan, your counsel didn't prevail, after all," said the instructor, "for I found Baker in a decidedly uncompromising state of mind. I think you'd better have another talk with him." Mr. Russell arose, still smiling, and moved to the door. "My advice to both you boys is to be sensible. Good evening."

"Now what the dickens did he mean by that?"

asked Jimmy, frowning perplexedly after the instructor. Dud laughed.

"He meant that your bluff didn't fool him a bit, you silly ass, if you want to know. I told him I meant to fight Meyer the first chance I got. Then you came in and began talking too much, as usual."

"Oh!" said Jimmy, grinning. "So that's it? Well, now what's to be done? I put it up to Star and he ab-so-lutely refused the invitation."

"I guess that ends it," said Dud. "I certainly don't intend to have any scrap with him now when faculty's on the watch. J. P. says they'd chuck me if I got caught at it. He's not a bad sort, J. P."

"Isn't it the very dickens!" muttered Jimmy, plunging his hands in his pockets and viewing his chum forlornly. "Just when everything was coming around our way, too!"

Dud shrugged philosophically. "I'll get even with him some time, even if I can't fight him now," he declared grimly. "Don't you worry."

"Yes, but that isn't going to help us much now," replied Jimmy perplexedly. "You see, I insisted that you were crazy for a scrap and Star will think——"

"Oh, who cares what Star thinks? Who cares what anybody thinks?" asked Dud impatiently. "I'm sick of the whole business."

"We've got to save our faces, though," said the other, shaking his head. "And so I guess——"

His face lighted suddenly. "That's the ticket! By Jove, Dud, we'll get credit out of this yet!"

"What silly scheme are you thinking about now?" asked his chum dubiously.

"Why, all we've got to do is to tell the truth!"

"All?" asked Dud sarcastically. "I'd say that was a whole lot for you to try, Jimmy."

"Yes, sir, just let it get around that faculty got wind of the thing and, knowing your reputation as a scrapper, sent J. P. to forbid you to fight! Great stuff, that!" Jimmy laughed delightedly. "Why, it's almost as good as the scrap!"

"Look here, Jimmy, I'm tired of the whole thing, I tell you. Let it drop, won't you?"

"Sure! Only we've got to have the last word, Dud! Now don't pester me any more. I've got to dig a bit."

But if Jimmy really studied, appearances were deceptive, for when, during the next hour, Dud occasionally glanced across the table, it was always to behold Jimmy with his hands locked behind his head, his gaze on the ceiling and a thoughtfully rapturous smile on his face. After study hour was over he disappeared.

Dud asked no questions the next day. As he had truthfully told Jimmy, he was tired of the whole affair. He was still deeply resentful toward Star Meyer, but his anger had cooled and he had no in-

tention of getting into trouble with the faculty for the scant satisfaction of being bruised up further by that youth. He was tired, too, of trying to become "a regular feller," to use Jimmy's descriptive phrase. What the latter liked to call "the campaign" had been, so far as beneficial results were concerned, a total failure. To be sure, Dud had enlarged his circle of acquaintances vastly; he was now on nodding or speaking acquaintance with fully three-fourths of the fellows; but what, as he asked himself disconsolately, was the good of knowing chaps if they didn't like you afterwards? He could still count on the fingers of one hand the fellows who really showed any disposition to be friendly: Hugh Ordway, Ben Myatt, Guy Murtha, Roy Dresser and Ed Brooks. He tried in vain to find a sixth. There was Jimmy, of course, but Jimmy was understood. Of the friendly ones only Ordway and Dresser could be called disinterested, he decided. Murtha was friendly because he wanted Dud to make good as a pitcher, Myatt because he took a sort of proprietary interest in the younger twirler, and Brooks because it had fallen to his lot to catch Dud frequently, and there had sprung up between them a sort of comradeship that, so far, ended with each day's work-out. As to Hugh Ordway, Dud suspected that that youth showed friendliness because he was naturally kind-hearted and had taken pity

on him. So that left only Roy Dresser, and Dresser was much older than Dud and went with the football crowd and, in the natural course of events, their paths seldom crossed. It would have been perfectly feasible for Dud to call on Dresser, but that would have required an amount of assurance that the younger boy didn't possess. No, judging by results, that "campaign" had not been a colossal success!

Just now, however, Dud didn't care so much whether he was popular or not. He was very full of baseball and secretly consumed by the ambition to make good as a pitcher and win a place on the first team. For the present that provided sufficient interest. He didn't really believe that he would succeed in his ambition; at least, not this year; but one may lack belief and still hope, and Dud was doing a whole lot of hoping. So far he had done as well as any of the "rookies" without, however, having distinguished himself in the least. He could flatter himself that neither Brunswick nor Kelly had been used more often than he, and he took encouragement from the fact. Sometimes he regretted that he had taken Ben Myatt's advice and changed his style. If he hadn't, he told himself, he might have showed a lot more by this time. Generally, though, he recognized the fact that Ben's advice had really been very sensible and that eventually, if not this

season, then next, he would find himself better off for having followed it. So far, though, the improvement that Ben had promised had developed very slowly, and he had days of discouragement. It seemed that what accuracy he had possessed before had quite left him. He could show speed and he could fool four batsmen out of five with his change of pace, but when the score got to be two-and-two and it was necessary to put them over he was as likely as not to be as wild as a hawk. Obeying Ben, he still avoided "hooks," making up his mind to leave such things quite alone until he was able to put the straight ones where he wanted them. Plenty of pitchers will tell you that it is harder to pitch a straight ball than a curve, and it's very nearly true. It is, in fact, entirely true in the case of a young pitcher who has started out pitching curves to the practical exclusion of straight balls. And Dud, having taught himself very largely, had begun his pitching career on the erroneous assumption that a wide knowledge of "hooks" and "curves" and "jumps" and other freakish things is a pitcher's best asset. It is not, though, for the simple reason that no pitcher ever combined a large variety of deliveries with that most valuable of all assets, control. "Putting it where you want it" is what counts, and the pitcher who can put a straight ball just where it will do the most good can dispose of the

batsman in far better style than one whose wide curves and drops and jumps refuse to break over the plate. All this Dud learned for himself eventually, but just now he was accepting it on faith, and his faith often failed him.

The day after Mr. Russell's visit to Number 19 Dud very carefully avoided a meeting with Star Meyer. When he left his room he listened to make sure that his neighbor was not also about to emerge, and in School Hall he searched the corridors between recitations in order that he would not find himself embarrassingly confronted by Star. When you have earnestly vowed to make another fellow fight it is a bit disconcerting to have to pass him by meekly! Dud's endeavors met with complete success until he entered the Field House in the afternoon to get into his playing togs. Then, as he feared, fortune deserted him. The first occupant of the room his eyes lighted on was Star, while, oddly enough, Star glanced across at the doorway at that instant and saw Dud. But that was all there was to it, for Star removed his gaze without a flicker of recognition, and Dud went to his own locker, fortunately the width of the room away from Star's, and attended strictly to the matter of making a hurried change of attire. Some of the fellows who had learned of the encounter between the two the afternoon before watched them expectantly until

Star, ready for work, left the building with Weston and Milford. Dud avoided the glances of the others as he pulled his togs on. They knew, he was certain, that he had sworn revenge against Star and were naturally viewing him disparagingly as a "quitter." Had he overheard a whispered conversation in one corner of the locker-room, however, he wouldn't have been troubled so much.

"Did you see Star sneak out?" chuckled Jones, a rather stout youth with ambitions looking toward a position in the first team outfield. "I'll bet he's mighty glad faculty read the riot act to Baker!"

"What was that?" asked Churchill, a third-choice shortstop.

"Didn't you hear? Why, Star and Baker had a row in here yesterday and went for each other, and Davy had to separate them. Star was mad because Baker hit him with the ball when he was at bat. Baker was wild, they say, and swore he'd get Star the first chance. So Davy pipes off the faculty and J. P. beats it to Baker's room and tells him that if he doesn't leave Star alone faculty'll jump him hard. So, of course, Baker has to promise to behave, but they say he's hopping mad and will get Star yet. I thought maybe he'd forget and light into him just now."

"Oh, peanuts! I guess Star isn't afraid of that

kid. Why, look at him! Star's six inches bigger every way!"

"That's all right," responded Jones, "but they say Baker's a regular terror when he gets started. Got thrown out of one school because he nearly killed a fellow there."

"That right?" asked the other incredulously.

"Surest thing you know, old scout! Ned Stiles was telling me. He knows the fellow Baker beat up." Jones gazed speculatively and admiringly at the unconscious Dud and shook his head. "He doesn't *look* awfully scrappy, does he? But, say, I'll bet he could hand you an awful wallop with that right of his! They say he's as clever as anything on his feet; just dances all around the other fellow and does about as he likes. You all ready?"

On the way out Churchill, regarding Dud in surreptitious awe, encountered that youth's gaze, and, as Dud at the instant happened to be frowning darkly at his thoughts, Churchill was ever after convinced that Dud was a fellow to be treated with the utmost respect!

CHAPTER XI

WITH THE SCRUBS

DUD speedily forgot all about Star Meyer, social aspirations and everything else except baseball, for they had their first practice game that afternoon and, although Dud wasn't called on to work during the first three innings, he became vastly absorbed in the proceedings. Mr. Sargent made up one team of seasoned veterans of previous campaigns, with Gus Weston pitching and Gordon catching, and formed the opposing team of the newer candidates, giving the twirling job to Nate Leddy and letting Ed Brooks catch him. Since it was the first contest of the year both teams were on their toes and went into it hard. From the practice diamond Mr. Crowley's second nine looked on enviously when the opportunity allowed.

Weston pitched nice ball for the regulars for two innings, mowing down the opposing batsmen impartially and even monotonously. But in the third, Ben Myatt, playing left field for the scrubs, landed on one of Gus's offerings and drove it far into right center, where neither Star Meyer nor Gordon Parker

could reach it in time to prevent him from reaching third. That put the following batsmen on their mettle, and before the inning was over Gus Weston had yielded four hits for a total of seven bases and three runs had crossed the plate. As, however, the regulars had by that time scored thrice owing to two singles and as many errors of the scrub's infield, the contest was far from decided. Weston managed to survive the fourth inning, although decidedly wobbly. He allowed two hits and passed Barnes, and the scrubs were yelling for a tally when Hugh Ordway fanned and made the last out, leaving an irate runner on third.

Brunswick went on the mound for the regulars in the fifth and Dud took Leddy's place for the scrub. After that, as might have been expected, the fielders were much busier and runs began to trickle across quite frequently. Dud pitched three innings that afternoon and performed fairly creditably. Ed Brooks, fast rounding into form as a catcher, knew Dud's failings and jockeyed him along with a lot of skill and wisdom. More than once Dud found himself in a hole, and if he escaped, as he generally did that day, it was more due to Brooks than to him. The catcher never hesitated to demand the third strike when it was due, leaving it to Dud to put on enough steam or to fool the batter with an unexpected slow ball, and it must be said to Dud's credit

that he frequently delivered the goods. But at that he was hammered hard by the head of the opposing batting list, and could only find consolation in the fact that Brunswick fared but little better at the hands of the scrubs.

Brunswick gave way to Joe Kelly in the eighth, and in that half-inning the scrubs almost snatched the game away from their haughty opponents. Kelly was wild and ineffective and filled the bases with the first three men up. Jimmy Logan, who had never set the world on fire with his batting, bunted cannily down the first-base line, managed to get in the way of Kelly's throw to the plate and not only saw two runners score but reached first in safety himself. Prentiss fouled out on the second delivery and Jimmy was caught going down to second. Dud, whose turn it was at bat, had but slight hope of turning in a hit. But Kelly had another ascension—or perhaps merely continued his first!—and got himself in the hole to the tune of one strike and three balls. Dud let another strike go by and then hit at the next delivery. Luck favored him, for Nick Blake, at short, made a miserable stop of a weak grounder and threw to first the fraction of a second too late, and the runner from third was safe. That run brought the scrubs' score to 11 to the regulars' 13 and, even with two down, the scrubs dreamed of tying it up. But Boynton dispelled the illusion by popping a weak fly to

Neil Ayer at first, and, since the practice period was up, Mr. Sargent called the game. For the succeeding half-hour the scrubs busied themselves to a man telling just how they would have won the game had it gone nine innings!

Doubtless pitching four innings to the tune of nine hits and two passes isn't anything remarkable, but Dud left the field that afternoon treading on air. If, he confided to himself, he had mixed a few hooks in with those straight ones and, perhaps, succeeded in getting a "floater" over nicely a few times, he would have cut those nine bingles down to three or four! And, anyway, Pete hadn't taken him out, as he had Brunswick, which showed that at least the coach was fairly satisfied with him. And when, while he was pulling off his togs, Guy Murtha stopped an instant to say "Good work, Baker: I like your style," the air under Dud's feet became roseate clouds! He didn't even recall Star Meyer's existence until, on the way to the showers, he literally ran into that youth. And then, instead of falling back, abashed, he pushed past the other with a fine indifference and rattled the curtain along the rod in Star's face!

Afterwards, going across the Green in the early twilight, he overtook a group of fellows and, contrary to his usual custom of passing them with a muttered and doubtful greeting, he fell into step with

Bert Winslow, much to that youth's surprise, and carelessly offered an observation to the effect that it had been a dandy game. Bert agreed unenthusiastically, shot a curious side-glance at the other, felt some of his antipathy toward him vanish and remarked quite cordially: "You're more of a pitcher than I thought, Baker. Where'd you learn it?"

"I haven't learned it yet," answered Dud, conquering his shyness with an effort that left him almost breathless. "Anyway, *you* didn't have much trouble hitting me, Winslow."

Bert accepted the compliment as merited, which it was, and thought better of the other's discernment and modesty, and while he was beginning a reply Nick Blake, walking a few steps ahead, turned and regarded Dud gravely and remarked sadly: "I'll give you a quarter next time, Baker, if you'll tip me off when you're going to pitch one of those slow ones. I don't mind hitting the air, but I hate to break my back. Besides, I'm extremely sensitive to ridicule, Baker."

The others laughed and Dud was spared the necessity of a reply by Bert Winslow. "If you were really sensitive to ridicule, Nick, you wouldn't try to play," he observed crushingly. Nick resented the insult promptly and battle ensued. Dud left the adversaries rolling on the turf, applauded by several

spectators, and made his way on to Trow, feeling much embarrassed and extremely happy.

The happiness was reflected in the letter which he wrote home the next afternoon, for that was Sunday, and Dud, while he sometimes dashed off a hurried note on a weekday, made it a practice to always fill four pages with his somewhat scrawly writing on Sundays. His epistles invariably commenced the same way:

DEAR MOTHER, FATHER AND SISTERS [there were two of the latter]:

I am well and getting on nicely. I hope you are all well when this reaches you.

After that he might change the rest of the contents from week to week, but Mrs. Baker, who read the letters aloud to a more or less attentive audience, could get through the first two sentences while she was still fixing her reading glasses on her nose. Today Dud's letter was far more cheerful than usual. In fact, it started right out being cheerful, and the weather, generally dwelt on at length, was utterly neglected.

A good deal has happened since I wrote last and things are getting pretty busy here. Something doing every minute in the big tent, like Jimmy says. Yesterday I pitched four whole innings in the first practice game we have had and did pretty well take everything in consideration. Dad will say

I'm boasting but I'm not because if I hadn't done pretty well Mr. Sargent would have canned me quick, I guess. They only got nine hits off me and Guy Murtha who is captain and a peach of a whanger only got one real hit off me and one that was mighty scratchy. I guess I did as well as Brunswick and I know I did better than Joe Kelly because Joe had an ascension and handed out passes to beat the band. Well, we're getting down to business here now all right, everybody's doing something, the Track Team has been out about a fortnight and so have we, nearly, and the tennis cracks are out on the courts and some of the fellows who play golf go over to the Mt. Grafton links. They let the school fellows play there for nothing, but I guess Charley pays them something for the privilege by the year. I'd like to try my hand at golf, but I guess it wouldn't be good for my pitching. I'm still sticking to straight balls, like I told you last week, but if I can get my control back pretty soon I'm going to try hooking them again. I guess you'll begin to think I don't do anything here at School but play baseball, but that isn't so because ever since mid-year exams most of us have been digging like anything. I'm all square again with Mr. Gring, but I told you that last week. He says if I could write English as well as I talk it I'd be all right but just the same I got Good on my last comp and would have got Excellent only for punctuation. Jimmy says I'm a punk punctuater. I guess I am, all right, too.

We play our first game the 25th with the second team and then we play Portsmouth Grammer the 28th. I'll send a card with the schedule on it so you will know when we play and whom. We have sixteen dates this spring but some of them aren't filled yet. It's very hard to get teams around here to play us because we usually beat them badly and they don't like it. I had a row with Starling Meyer in the Field

House the other day and he slapped me and Davy, he's the trainer, butted in. I was going to make Star fight but faculty got wise and J. P. came up and said if I did I'd get in trouble, so I didn't. But I'll fix him some other way. Jimmy is well and as crazy as ever. He is out for the first too and I guess he will make it, anyway he has more chance than I have, but I feel very much more encouraged since Pete let me pitch all through the last of the game yesterday like I told you. I didn't get your letter until Friday last week so I guess dad forgot to post it again. You ask him if he didn't. He will say Pooh, Pooh, but I'll bet anything he did. I'm getting on fine. I've met some more fellows who are on the nine and everything's fine and dandy. Please tell dad that I'd like it if I could have my allowance a little before the first this month because I have to dig down for the track team assessment. They voted to tax all of us fifty cents apiece, which is O.K. only I haven't got it to spare. Love to you all,

Your aff. Son,

DUDLEY.

Dud was highly pleased with that letter, for he discovered that he had bettered his usual four pages by two more. There was besides, he decided, a literary flavor to it that most of his epistles lacked; and he was certain that his father would chuckle about forgetting to post that letter; and maybe he would send the allowance right away!

After it was finished he and Jimmy went down to the Beach and, since they had no canoe of their own and the punts belonging to the school were hard to

row and likely to prove leaky, borrowed one of the many that reposed under the trees along the Cove. They were in doubt for a while as to which particular craft to requisition, since it was distinctly advisable to select one whose owner was not likely to want it that day. The difficulty was finally solved by Dud, who recalled the fact that young Twining was in the infirmary with German measles. Twining was only a junior, anyway, and juniors had few rights even when perfectly well, and still fewer when they weren't! So Dud blithely led the way to a gorgeous light blue Old Town, and together they bore it to the muddy water of the Cove and clambered in.

"It's the best canoe here, too," observed Jimmy contentedly, as he dipped his paddle at the bow. (Jimmy took the bow paddle because, or so he declared, there was more responsibility connected with that position. Dud, while not deceived in the least, never objected, for he had a notion that stern paddling would develop his arm muscles.) "They say that little bounder has heaps of money, millions and millions; that is, his dad has. Did I ever tell you about the old darkey woman who used to work for us? She was telling mother about some man who was terribly rich, you know, and mother said, 'I suspect he's a millionaire, Dorah.' 'A millionaire, Mis' Logan!' says she. 'Bless yo' heart, honey, that

man's got sev'ral millions of airs!' Guess that's the way with Twining's dad, eh?"

"That's a peach of a canoe that Ordway's got," said Dud, after he had laughed at Jimmy's story.

"Too fancy," replied the other as they left the Cove and headed down the river. "He has about everything in it except a grand piano!"

"I suppose it cost a lot," said Dud.

"I'll bet it did. I told him the other day that it was too pretty to use, and he said he thought it was, too. Seems he didn't know much about canoes and let Bert Winslow order it, and Bert got all the trimmings the law allows. That's like Bert. I guess it's too heavy to handle well. Here comes Brew Longley and Foster Tray. Don't forget to speak now!"

A battered green canoe occupied by two youths passed and salutations were exchanged. For once Dud managed to get just the proper amount of mixed hauteur and friendliness in his greeting. Somehow, since yesterday, it wasn't so hard to do things like that. Tray, a football player and track team member, laughed as the canoes passed. "See you got a canoe now, Jimmy," he called.

Jimmy waved his paddle nonchalantly. "Yes, it's a poor thing but mine own. I'll let you use it, Tray, any time you like. I believe in lending to them as hasn't."

"You believe in borrowing, too, don't you?" laughed Longley.

"Anything but trouble," responded Jimmy, over his shoulder.

They paused near the old wooden bridge beyond the boathouse to watch an automobile dash by at some forty miles an hour, and Jimmy sighed as he began to paddle again. "I always think every time that the old affair will fall into the river, but it never does. I never do have any luck!" Beyond the bridge, where the river widened as it wound through the marshes, they met a canoe at about every turn. Many were drawn to the bank, and their crews were usually lying at ease above. About two miles beyond the bridge and within view of Needham Falls they overtook a white canoe, or a canoe that had been white at one time, apparently empty, since at a little distance nothing showed but an idle paddle and the backs of the seats.

"That," mused Dud, "looks like Ordway's. It must have got away from him somewhere further back. We'd better tow it home, hadn't we?"

"I guess so. Got anything we can tie it up with?" Jimmy altered the direction of his craft to run alongside the derelict.

"Maybe we can use my belt," Dud suggested. But at that moment they came near enough to see into the white canoe and discovered that it was far

from empty, since two forms were stretched out flat on the bottom. One had the colored pages of a Sunday paper over his face and was consequently unrecognizable, but the other was unmistakably Nick Blake himself. Jimmy signaled to stop paddling and the canoe floated silently alongside.

"Asleep!" whispered Jimmy. Dud nodded. Their eyes questioned. Here, plainly, was a Heaven-sent opportunity to perpetrate a joke, but what form the joke was to take was not easily decided. Dud watched Jimmy expectantly, and Jimmy frowned thoughtfully, benignantly down on the recumbent forms. If, he pondered, there was some way of fixing a line to the white canoe without waking the occupants it would be a lark to tow it down to the Falls and tie it up there in plain sight of the trolley bridge. But Nick or his companion would probably wake before they had accomplished that deed. And, besides, there was no rope handy. Jimmy was for once at a loss. So, evidently, was Dud, for the latter returned Jimmy's inquiring look blankly. The precious moments passed. And then, while Jimmy still racked his usually prolific brain, Nick's lips opened, although not his eyes, and Nick's voice murmured: "Hello, Jimmy! How well you're looking. Isn't he, 'Ighness?"

And from under the newspaper came the reply in dreamy accents: "Oh, rather! Perfectly ripping!"

CHAPTER XII

ON THE RIVER

"YOU chumps!" growled Jimmy in deep disgust. "What do you think you're doing, anyway?"

"It's a sad story," murmured Nick. "We were shipwrecked six—seven—how many days ago was it, Mr. Ordway?"

"Seven, Mr. Blake."

"Ay, seven days ago, sir, and ever since we have been tossed about in this tiny boat at the mercy of the sea and tempest and——"

"Elements," suggested the voice from under the comic supplement.

"Ay, elephants! At last—at last——"

"Get that in about no food nor water," prompted the other in a hoarse whisper.

"I forgot to say that there was no time to provision the boat. For six days——"

"Seven!"

"For seven days we were without food or drink, and at last, weak and exhausted, we lay down in the bottom of the boat and died."

"Oh, so you're dead?" asked Jimmy interestedly.

"Dead as anything," replied Nick cheerfully. "You dead, Mr. Ordway?"

"Fearfully, thanks."

"I thought so. When one is dead one's memory is apt to be a bit uncertain, though. That's why I asked. Gentleman here inquired. Very kind of him, I'm sure. Wasn't it kind of him, 'Ighness?"

"Extraordinarily kind! Most polite, I'm quite sure!"

"The trouble with you fellows," said Jimmy solicitously, "is that you've been lying around here in the sun. What you need is a local application of cold water to the cranium——"

"Doesn't he talk beautifully, 'Ighness?"

"It's wonderful," sighed the other.

"And it's my duty to attend to the matter," concluded Jimmy. Nick opened his eyes then and the colored supplement quivered emotionally.

"Respect the dead, Jimmy," warned Nick, "or I'll forget that I'm a lifeless corpse and lay you out with a paddle. Who's there with you?"

"Dud Baker."

"Ah, the sprightly Baker," murmured Nick. "Salutations, Baker."

"Hello," replied Dud from the further end of the canoe. "Hello, Ordway."

Hugh cast aside the paper and carefully assumed

a sitting position. "Hello, Baker," he said. "Nick, I fancy we're rescued."

"Too late," answered his companion in disaster gloomily. "We're dead. It's perfectly silly to come along at this late day and rescue us, Jimmy."

"Well, if you're dead it's up to us to bury you. Mind if we don't sew you up in sacks, Nick? We're awfully shy of sacks."

"I mind terribly. I couldn't think of being buried at sea without a sack. I suppose you'll tell me next that you haven't even a cannon ball to sink me with!"

"He might use a couple of those doughnuts," suggested Hugh, poking with one foot at a bundle in the middle of the canoe.

"Doughnuts?" asked Jimmy eagerly. "Got eats in there, fellows?"

"Yes, sir." Nick pulled himself up with a groan. "We're off on a picnic, Jimmy. And that reminds me, Hugh, that it's about time we looked for a picturesque sylvan glade somewhere. Seen any of those things, Jimmy?"

Jimmy, who had been working the light blue canoe along until it now rocked companionably beside the white one, shook his head. "No," he answered. "Let's—er—let's look at one of those doughnuts, Nick."

Nick viewed him speculatively and then dropped his gaze to the bundle. "I wouldn't want to expose

them to the air, Jimmy. They get stale so soon, you see. But I'll describe them to you. They're big and fat and sort of a lovely golden-brown color, and they've got sugar sprinkled on their circumferences, so to speak. Honest, Jimmy, they're awfully *tasty* doughnuts. You'd like 'em, I feel sure."

"Stingy brute! Come across, Nick. I'm as hungry as a bear. You've got plenty, I'll bet."

"Depends," replied Nick, clasping his hands about his knees, "what you call plenty. We've got only a dozen."

"You can have a couple of my six," laughed Hugh, reaching for the luncheon.

"One moment," interposed Nick. "Tell you what, 'Ighness. Here we are with more food than we can eat, and here are two famished mariners miles from port. What's the answer?"

"Why, we invite them to dinner, of course."

"Correct! Turn your old tub around, Jimmy, and paddle back to the willows and we'll go ashore and have a banquet. We've only got three chops, but there's lots of bread and butter and some cheese and a can of peaches. Only we forgot to bring an opener, and so I don't just see—— You don't happen to carry a can-opener with you, do you Baker?"

"No, but I think I can-opener without one," replied Dud.

"Wow!" said Jimmy.

Nick turned with great difficulty and viewed Dud reproachfully. "You shouldn't do that," he said. "I don't mind for myself. I'm strong. But Hugh here won't get that before tomorrow morning at eleven-thirty-nine, and meanwhile he will puzzle that poor English bean of his and get faint and dizzy. You shouldn't, Baker, you shouldn't!"

"Get what?" asked Hugh innocently.

Jimmy laughed and Nick nodded sorrowfully at him. "Listen, 'Ighness," he explained patiently. "It was like this. I asked Baker if he carried a can-opener with him. Get that?"

"Perfectly. And he said he could open it without one. What's the joke?"

Nick cast his hands aside hopelessly. "What's the use? What's the use?" he demanded. "Come on and let's paddle. I'm sta-a-arved!"

"How about getting back for supper?" inquired Jimmy. "It's 'way after five now."

"We get lost or we have an upset or something," rejoined Nick carelessly. "We discussed that, but I forget now just what we decided."

"That's all right for you," objected Jimmy as he and Dud swung their craft around, "but what about us? We can't all get upset?"

"Why not?" asked Nick, reaching for his paddle. "There's plenty of water, isn't there?"

"But, I say, Nick," remonstrated Hugh, "if we

tell them we were upset we'll have to get our clothes wet, eh?"

"Um, that's so. I hadn't thought of that. Oh, well, never mind now. We'll think up something going back."

"We might let the canoes get away from us and have to chase them," suggested Dud.

"Perfect!" applauded Nick. "Baker, you have a great mind. Tell you what, my hearties. After we get to the willows we'll carelessly let the canoes get away, see? Then we'll catch 'em further downstream. They won't ask us how *far* we had to chase 'em. Even if they do we can be vague."

"Maybe we'd better try to get back on time," said Hugh.

"Squealer!" Nick, in the stern, reproachfully splashed Hugh's back. "There's no fun picnicking if you have to go home right away and eat another meal."

"Oh, all right, old chap," agreed Hugh. "Only don't throw any more water down my neck. It's beastly cold."

There was silence then for a few minutes while the two canoes passed leisurely down the winding stream, side by side. Westward, the sun was dropping close to the greening summit of the low hills and the April day was almost at its end. There was a perceptible chill in the little breeze that crept

across the meadows and made catspaws on the quiet surface of the water. Early blackbirds were fluttering along the banks ahead of the canoes, uttering their creaky notes and simulating wild alarm. A fish leaped after a reckless insect and fell back with a startling splash, sending widening circles away in the amber glow. They didn't paddle much, for there was enough current to bear them along. Jimmy frankly shipped his blade and watched the drops trickle. Nick's voice came across the few yards of water.

"Somebody will please say some poetry," he requested.

"'Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds.

"'Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl——'"

"That'll be about all of that," interrupted Nick. "If you don't know anything cheerful, 'Ighness, dry up. 'The moping owl'! Where do you get that stuff, anyway?"

"Chap name of Gray wrote it," replied Hugh meekly.

"Thought so! Same fellow who did that 'Elegy on a Country Cemetery,' or whatever it is. He was

a jovial old Johnnie, wasn't he? Bet you he'd have been swell company at a funeral!"

"If you want something bright and sparkling," offered Jimmy, "I know a nice little poem about a hanging! It begins——"

"Never mind how it begins! Want to spoil a perfectly good appetite? I say, you fellows, we'll race you to the willows. Dig, 'Ighness!"

Followed a spirited race around the last bend to where a group of willows leaned out over the shadowed water. Victory was claimed by both crews, and the matter was never finally settled, for Nick tactfully introduced the subject of supper in the middle of the argument and leaped ashore with the brown-paper package that contained the precious viands. Dried marsh grass and the paper from the bundle started a fire at the foot of one gnarled willow, and small pieces of driftwood, deposited by some winter flood, were piled on. Meanwhile Hugh made the discovery that they had failed to provide salt for the chops and that Nick had neglected to bring his folding cup. Jimmy helpfully reminded them that it was an ancient custom, or so he had read, to substitute gunpowder for salt when the latter was not to be had, and so *that* was all right! Nick called him an idiot and borrowed his knife to sharpen a stick on which to broil the chops. In payment Jimmy helped himself to a doughnut.

CHAPTER XIII

CONFESSION

A QUARTER of an hour later they were sitting around the bed of glowing coals busily concerned with the chops and bread and butter. The chops were decidedly underdone in the middle although beautifully crisp outside, and Nick came in for some criticism as a cook. But each of the four ate his share—it had proved rather a problem to divide three chops into four equal portions!—and so, if the proof of "the pudding is in the eating," Nick was vindicated. They had also brought four potatoes to roast, but it was decided that life was too short and appetites too impatient to wait for them, and so Jimmy buried them in the ground, after carefully cutting them into quarters, and agreed to share the proceeds of the crop in September with the others, estimating the yield at two pecks. When they were thirsty they went down the bank, climbed into a canoe and leaned their heads into the river, thus, as Nick pointed out, getting not only a drink but a bath.

The doughnuts, now diminished to eleven, were

served out as dessert, Jimmy, of course, receiving only two as his share, and were consumed with the peaches and cheese. Jimmy's knife was rather the worse for its encounter with the can, but Dud kept his promise of opening the latter. They speared the peaches out with slivers, passing the can around the circle until nothing was left but the juice. Then they drank that. Afterwards they tossed the can into the river and threw pebbles at it until it floated slowly out of range. By that time it was fully twilight and the April evening was growing chill. So they built up the fire again and sat closer, huddling together for better protection from the little breeze that whispered through the dead grass and leafless boughs. For a while no one showed much inclination for conversation, but after a while Hugh let fall a murmured remark and presently they were talking desultorily of this and that, or, at least, Jimmy and Hugh and Nick were. Dud, as usual, had little to say, and finally Nick remarked:

"Shut up, Baker, and let someone else get a word in. I never heard such a chatterbox."

Jimmy chuckled. "Isn't he gabby?" he asked.

"Is he like this in the room, Jimmy?" Nick inquired.

"N-no, and that's the funny part of it. When he and I are alone together he's just full of words; can't get them out fast enough. In company, though,

he's horribly otherwise. I've been trying to break him of it, but"—Jimmy sighed lugubriously—"nothing doing."

"I dare say he believes in waiting until he has something to say," offered Hugh. "Is that the idea, Baker?"

"Oh, I don't know." Dud laughed uncertainly. "I never seem to think of things when—when I'm around with a crowd."

"Well, you don't call us a crowd, do you?" demanded Nick. "Come on now; loosen up; spring some of those scintillant remarks that Jimmy is always repeating. Know what he does, Baker? Well, he tells 'em around and sort of gets the credit for 'em himself. Of course, he says you said them, but there's a sort of—of inflection in his voice that gives you the idea that he put you up to it or—or something; if you know what I mean, as Hugh would say."

"Oh, Dud's full of bright things," said Jimmy carelessly. "Only the trouble is he doesn't talk for publication."

"And you're his press agent, eh?" laughed Nick. "I've often wondered——" He stopped. Then he laughed softly and Jimmy was aware that he was regarding him mirthfully in the half darkness.

"What's the bally joke?" murmured Hugh.

"Oh, nothing. That is——" Nick fell into

silence again. Then: "Most of the things Jimmy tells sound a whole lot like Jimmy," he stated suggestively. There was a moment's silence, broken at last by Dud.

"They are Jimmy's," he said quietly.

"Here, don't try to put the blame on me!" Jimmy laughed loudly. "That's a punk trick, Dud!"

"Honest confession is good for the soul," said Nick lightly. "Come across, Jimmy. What's the idea? Everyone knows you've been touting Baker like anything ever since Christmas recess. What is it, a conspiracy?"

Jimmy laid a twig carefully on the fire. "I don't know what you're talking about," he grumbled.

"Oh, yes, you do, old man! We're all friends together, you know, and nothing you say will be used against you. That all right, Baker?"

"Don't ask him," replied Jimmy. "He'd tell you anything. He's incapable of the truth. Say, what's the matter with getting back, fellows?"

"Oh, there's plenty of time," said Nick. "Joking aside, Jimmy, just what is the big idea?"

"Go ahead and tell," urged Dud. "I don't mind. Besides, they won't talk."

"Oh, you!" said Jimmy in disgust. "What is there to tell? Well, all right, fellows. Only this is just between us, understand? It's a little scheme of my own. You see, Dud here is—well, he's just as

you see him now. He thinks big thoughts and he's a nice boy, but he's a graven image when he gets outside his room. Well, he likes fun as much as the rest of us but he doesn't get it because he always thinks he isn't wanted around. He—he's shy, you know. At least, I suppose that's it. I never was that way and don't know much about it."

Nick and Hugh laughed.

"So I said one day: 'Dud,' I said, 'you do like I tell you and I'll have you mixing in no time at all. I'll make a regular feller of you, and it won't cost you a cent. All you've got to do is what I tell you.' So Dud said: 'Oh, pshaw!' or words to that effect, but agreed to try the scheme. First thing I did was to make a list of fellows he ought to know. Then we started in and got acquainted. It was hard sledding because just as soon as I got him into a bunch of fellows he'd get tongue-tied. Well, I saw that that wouldn't do and so I began to get off the good things Dud said——"

"All of which you made up?" chuckled Nick.

"No, not all, honest. Some I did, of course. Dud didn't deliver the goods fast enough. And—well, that's all there is to it. Perfectly legitimate, you see, although Dud has had his doubts now and then and threatened mutiny once or twice. We've got on fairly well. I haven't exactly popularized him yet, but I haven't done so badly either. Lately he's

been sort of kicking over the traces and refusing to pull, but we're progressing slowly. Now you know all about it. If either of you chaps blab I'll punch your head."

"So that's it," mused Nick. "Some scheme, eh, 'Ighness?"

"Rather!"

"I'm glad you know," said Dud, embarrassed, "because it's always seemed so silly for Jimmy to go around getting off a lot of funny jokes and crediting them to me, and then—then for me to just stand around and act like a dummy. I suppose we went into it as a sort of lark, or—well, I don't know. I suppose it sounds funny to you chaps. But I wanted you to know."

"I knew already," said Hugh. "That is, I guessed a long time ago."

"Honest?" exclaimed Jimmy. "Say, that's queer, because when I asked Dud which of the fellows he'd like to——"

"Shut up, Jimmy!" implored Dud.

"Why? There's no harm in it, you chump. I asked Dud who he'd like to know most and he said——"

"*Please* dry up, Jimmy!"

"He said Hugh Ordway. That's why we butted in on you one night a long while ago."

"Really? Well, you know, that's quite a compli-

ment, Baker. I'm afraid, though, you didn't find me—what's the word, Nick?"

"Responsive?"

"Well, yes. Or appreciative, I guess; that's better. If I'd known——"

"You didn't expect Baker to tell you, did you?" asked Nick. "If you really wanted to know a fine, respectable member of the community, though, Baker, why didn't you select me? I can't understand you wanting to know this cold-blooded Britisher."

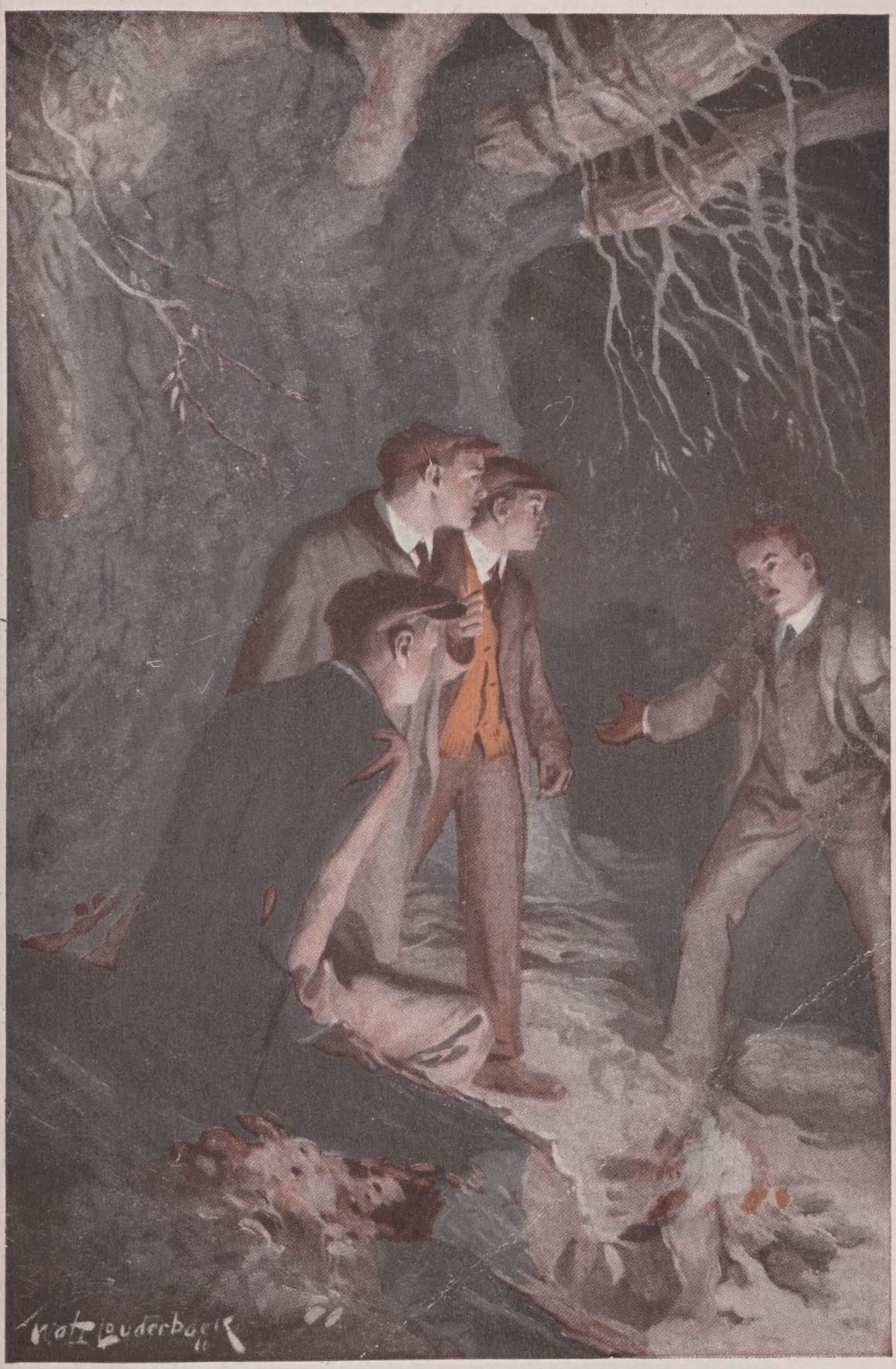
"I think we called on you next," answered Dud, laughing.

"Did you? Well, thanks for small favors! But look here, Jimmy, it's been fun for you, I guess, but you haven't done Baker much good, you idiot! A fellow's got to work out his own—his own salvation at school. No one else can do it for him. Now you let Baker hoe his own row, and——"

"That's all you know about it," replied Jimmy tranquilly. "Dud is on speaking terms with about every fellow worth knowing now and before I took him in hand——"

"That's all right, but I'd rather have a half-dozen real friends than be able to say 'Hello' to everyone. All Baker needs is to put his chin up and —and get out and—and mix!"

"Sure!" agreed Jimmy sarcastically. "That's all!



" 'The canoes have gone!' "

But suppose he can't do it? Suppose he hasn't got the—the assurance? Then what? Why, that's where I come in, do you see?"

"You're an ass," laughed Nick. "Baker, you take my advice and discharge your press agent. He's no good. Anyway, you won't need him any more."

"It's funny about being popular, or whatever you like to call it," mused Hugh. "Funny, I mean, how some fellows are and some aren't; and lots of times the popular chaps aren't the ones you like best, if you know what I mean."

"Very clear, 'Ighness; almost pellucid," said Nick. "Just the same——"

"I don't think I ever wanted to be what you'd call popular," interrupted Dud. "I never could be, I'm sure. All I did want was to know more fellows and not feel quite so much out of everything. Of course, being a lower middler I dare say it's cheeky to want to mix with fellows in the upper classes——"

"Don't see it that way," said Nick. "Very commendable ambition, I'd call it. Shows a desire to seek—er—refinement and wisdom, and——"

"Oh, let's get back," said Jimmy. "I'm freezing to death. Besides, you chaps may say what you like, but I know that without my skillful handling of the case Dud wouldn't be sitting here tonight listening to you talk a lot of poppycock, Nick. Results are

what count, and as a—a press agent, if you like, I've produced results. Now someone tell me I haven't!"

"If you call this a result," began Nick doubtfully.

"Of course I do! Dud has shown you two chaps that, whether he's a brilliant conversationalist or isn't, he's a perfectly human sort of a chump, and you both like him a little better than you did yesterday, and tomorrow Dud can go around and mention to a few fellows that last evening he picnicked with Ordway and Blake on the river, and the fellows will think, 'Now if Baker is in with Ordway and Nick Blake he must be all right,' and——"

"Don't be a rotter, Jimmy!" begged Dud.

"Rotter nothing! It's so, isn't it? Mind, I don't say you will tell about it, but you could. You won't, as a matter of fact, because you don't play the game for all it's worth."

"Honest, Jimmy, you're enough to sicken a fellow," said Nick. "If I thought you believed what you preached, or practiced it——"

"I do," insisted Jimmy stoutly.

"You don't," contradicted Dud. "Come on home before you talk any more nonsense."

"I deny the nonsense," replied Jimmy good-naturedly, "but I'm perfectly willing to go home. I've been trying to for half an hour. Help me up, someone. My legs are stiff with the cold. I say, we mustn't forget to let the canoes get adrift, fellows."

"Oh, rot," said Hugh. "If we've got to lie, let's lie decently."

"Why lie at all, then?" asked Dud. "Let's just say that we wanted to have supper on the river, and —and had it!"

"Not a bad idea," applauded Nick. "Who knows but that we'll get off easy that way? Faculty will be so surprised when we don't offer any of the usual excuses that they'll probably forget to put us on pro. Anyway, let's try it."

"I'll try anything once," murmured Jimmy, as he stretched his numbed legs. "I wonder, though, if we can see our way back? Bet you we'll run into the bank every two minutes! Where the dickens is that canoe? I thought we left it right here. And where's——" Jimmy stopped and turned toward the others approaching. "Say, fellows, I know an awfully good joke," he drawled.

"What is it?" demanded Nick suspiciously.

"Get ready to laugh. All set? Well, the canoes have gone!"

CHAPTER XIV

MAROONED!

"GONE!" exclaimed Hugh. "My word! But how——"

"Cut out the comedy, Jimmy," said Nick. "Aren't they there, really?"

"Well, you come and have a look. Maybe your sight is better than mine. I haven't my glasses with me and so, of course, I may be mistaken, but nevertheless and notwithstanding——"

"Well, I'll be switched!" muttered Nick, holding a flaring match aloft in the darkness. "Now how the dickens——"

"I guess," offered Dud, "that getting in and out of them to drink pushed them off."

"That's the jolly story," agreed Hugh. "But they were there the last time I went down."

"Who took the last drink?" asked Jimmy.

"You did, didn't you? Did you see both canoes then?"

Jimmy turned to Nick in the gloom and considered. At last: "I didn't notice," he confessed. "It was pretty dark then——"

"But I say," interrupted Hugh, "what are we going to do, eh?"

"Beat it home, 'Ighness," responded Nick, "if you know what I mean. There's no use looking for the pesky things tonight. I dare say, anyway, they'll run aground somewhere before they get very far. What we've got to do is foot it back. How far is it, Jimmy?"

"About a mile and a half," answered Jimmy gloomily, "and most of the way across this plaguey marsh. Unless we strike across that direction and find the Yarrow road."

"That would be worse than looking for the canoes," said Nick. "Best thing to do is follow the river as well as we can. Come on!"

"I say, if I fall in you might sing out so I'll know which way to swim," suggested Hugh. "Tomorrow I'm going to buy an anchor for that canoe, Nick; that is, if I ever find it."

"Gee!" muttered Jimmy.

"What's the matter?" asked Nick.

"I was just recalling the interesting fact that the canoe we were in belongs to young Twining, the little beast, and he will be likely to be quite peevish if it's lost."

"How inconsiderate!" laughed Nick. "He's a junior, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"That's all right then. You can point out to him that it's a great honor for him to have his canoe lost by an upper middler. Besides, it'll turn up in the morning. Oh, thunder!"

"I should say so!" agreed Hugh, scrambling out of the ditch he had followed Nick into. "'Ware water, fellows!"

Dud and Jimmy escaped that time, but during the next half-hour or so they had their share of misfortunes. There was no moon and the stars were partly hidden by light clouds and it was impossible to see more than a pace ahead at any time. They never actually tumbled into the river, but they frequently stumbled down the bank and only saved themselves by prompt laying hold of whatever they could reach, as when Nick, walking too close to the edge and finding himself slipping, promptly clutched Hugh's leg and nearly doubled the catastrophe! It seemed more like an hour than a half-hour since they had left the willows before they caught sight of the old bridge looming indistinctly above them. After that the rest was easy, for they had only to break their way through the bushes that clad the embankment and foot it along Crumbie Street to the corner of the campus, their path now illumined by the infrequent street lights. Under the first of them they stopped to take stock. Every one of them was wet to the knees or above and plastered here and there with

the nice, dark, rich mud of the marshes. It was almost eight o'clock and any hope they may have entertained of reaching their various rooms undetected had long since vanished. Nick sighed philosophically as he turned to continue his journey, his shoes *squish-squashing* at every step.

"Anyway," he said, "when we tell them we lost the canoes and had to walk home they'll just have to believe us! That is the one bright spot in the surrounding gloom."

"I've always wondered," mused Jimmy, "how it would feel to be on probation."

"You ought to know by this time," chuckled Dud. "You've been there twice already." For some reason, Dud seemed less troubled by the impending disaster than the others.

Jimmy sniffed. "I don't know, Mr. Baker, where you get your information, but you have been sadly misled. The other occasions to which you doubtless allude——"

"Shut up, Jimmy," warned Nick. "And, say, we'd better part company about now. You and Baker beat it up here and Hugh and I'll amble careless-like over to River Street. I hate to attract attention, I'm that modest. Nighty-night!"

"Same to you," replied Jimmy. "And thanks for a pleasant party. Although I must say that your

arrangements for getting us home were a bit—ah—primitive!"

"Don't mention it! Farewell, brothers. We meet in prison!"

Whether by design or accident, Mr. Russell's study door was wide open as Dud and Jimmy quietly slipped from the stairway well into the first-floor corridor of Trow, and, although they didn't think it advisable to stop to pass the time of day with the instructor, they stopped just the same.

"Ah, Logan, is that you?" It was "J. P.'s" voice. The two boys retraced their steps and halted at the doorway.

"Yes, sir," replied Jimmy brightly.

"And Baker, too, I see. Well, young gentlemen, where have you been? We missed your bright and smiling faces at supper tonight."

Mr. Russell seemed to be in a pleasant mood, though one couldn't always be certain from appearances, and so Jimmy, as spokesman, smiled his most winning smile and answered truthfully: "In the mud, sir."

"Indeed? Yes, I see. All the evidence tends to corroborate your quaint statement. But why in the mud, Logan?"

Jimmy hesitated an instant and then decided to make a clean breast of the matter. Mr. Russell

heard him through, smiling pleasantly. And when the tale was told he said: "A most interesting narrative, Logan, on my word. You show a nice sense of dramatic construction. But really, boys, I'm rather afraid trouble will come of this. You know there's a rule about being in bounds by six o'clock on Sundays, eh? By the way, you brought your fellow miscreants back with you, I trust? I refer to Ordway and Blake."

"Yes, sir; they're back," replied Jimmy dispiritedly. Mr. Russell's tone now wasn't so reassuring.

"And they, too, were—ah—in the mud?"

Jimmy grinned. "You'd think so if you saw them! They fell right in a ditch once!"

"Really?" Mr. Russell smiled quite broadly. "Well, I suppose it's all a grand lark with you youngsters, eh? Dear, dear, what a thing it is to be young! Get those wet things off, boys, and stay in your room for the rest of the evening. Possibly——" He caught himself up. Then: "We'll hope for the best. Hm! Better look to your ways for awhile, though, both of you. How about that little matter we spoke of recently, Baker? Any—ah—any developments?"

"No, sir. I—I quit."

"Wise youth! Go your ways, young gentlemen. Ponder on your sins and"—Mr. Russell took

up his book again—"refresh your souls with the sweet communion——"

The rest was only a mumble. Dud and Jimmy stole noiselessly away.

Fortune was good to them on the morrow. They were assembled, a sober quartette, in Dr. Duncan's office after breakfast and gravely reprimanded and told that only a diligent application to studies could wipe out the stain of their guilt. Promises of unfaltering labor being at once forthcoming from each, they were dismissed with a final admonition to mend their ways and, they thought, a sigh of relief from the principal, never at his best in the rôle of Stern Authority.

After a ten o'clock recitation, Nick and Jimmy hurried up the river in Nick's canoe and recovered the lost craft, Twining's being found lodged against the bridge timbers and Hugh's a half-mile up the stream, entangled in a sunken branch. That, to all appearances, ended the affair, but in reality there was one important consequence that was lost sight of, which was the acceptance of Dud into the circle in which Nick Blake and Hugh Ordway revolved. It didn't happen all at once, and for a week or two Dud himself didn't realize it, but at the end of that period he suddenly discovered himself sitting with Hugh and Nick and Bert Winslow and Ted Trafford in Nick's room very gravely dis-

cussing such important subjects as The Value of the Sacrifice Hit, Overhand versus Underhand Pitching, When to Use the Pinch-Play and The Duties of a Third-Baseman on a Bunt to His Territory with a Man on Second. Perhaps Dud didn't take a very large part in the discussion, but when he had anything to say he found voice to say it, and a few remarks from him on the subject of underhand pitching were well received. But the main thing was that he was there, not on sufferance but, as it seemed, quite naturally and as a matter of course. He surreptitiously pinched himself, found he was actually awake and then, for a moment, was visibly embarrassed.

I don't pretend that either Hugh or Nick would have been broken-hearted if Dud hadn't been present that evening, nor shall I attempt to guess just how much of the friendliness they displayed was due to sympathy. On the other hand, they were more than willing to have him there, and, when they thought of it, were at some pains to make him feel welcome. Ted Trafford took his cue from his host, and Bert Winslow's attitude was one of careless toleration. He still looked on Dud with suspicion. Jimmy Logan couldn't foist any lemon on him, as he once eloquently put it to Hugh! Still, he didn't actually dislike the younger boy, and, save for an occasional mildly sarcastic comment occa-

sioned by what he called Dud's cheek in trying to squirm his way into upper class company and the first team, he treated the latter decently enough. The evening ended with ginger-ale and grape-juice, mixed in equal proportions in a pitcher, the scant remains of a pineapple cheese and some crackers. Ted Trafford and Dud went back to Trow together, rather silently since Ted was sleepy and Dud had nothing important to say, and parted in the corridor. Dud reflected afterwards that Trafford might have said, "Come and see me some time, Baker," or something to like effect. But he didn't. He merely nodded sleepily, yawned and murmured: "Night!" Dud was a bit disappointed, and without cause. Ted Trafford, who was a big, good-hearted senior, would have issued that invitation had it occurred to him that the younger boy would have set any store by it. As it was, the thought didn't enter his mind. If Baker was a friend of Nick and Hugh, why, that was all there was to it. "Any friend of my friend," is the way Ted would have put it.

Followed a week bare of real incident. Dud, like the other members of that picnic party, applied himself doggedly to his lessons in an effort to get square with the Office again and turned out each week-day afternoon for baseball practice. Sometimes he pitched for the scrubs and more often his work con-

sisted of serving them up to the batters at the net and, afterwards, being relieved by Kelly or Brunswick, practicing batting himself. The first game of the season came off that Wednesday afternoon, with the second team as the opponent. It wasn't much of a contest. Errors swelled the score of each team and all sorts of delays slowed the game up so that there was time for only seven innings. Dud took no part, the twirling being performed by Ben Myatt for three innings and by Nate Leddy for the rest of the game. The second team pitchers were severely handled and the first won by the decisive score of 17 to 7.

If there was any special sensation in that contest it was in the sudden eminence of "Hobo" Ordway as a batter. Hugh, going into the line-up in the fourth inning, came twice to bat and on each occasion smashed a long, clean two-bagger into left-center. In the field he had only three chances, but he took them all. It was only in throwing in that Hugh was weak. Jimmy went to right field for three innings, made one rather brilliant running catch of a long fly, failed to get a hit and retired in favor of a pinch hitter in the sixth. After that Wednesday game life settled down again rather monotonously, but not uninterestingly, for Dud. On Saturday the team journeyed away and played Portsmouth Grammar School and won handily against a

weak adversary. Dud didn't accompany the team as a member nor did he go along with the half-hundred ardent rooters. Neither did Jimmy. Mr. Russell in refusing their request for leave, intimated that the afternoon might be spent far more profitably in study. "J. P." was kindly but firm. Doubtless his advice was well-meant and worthy of consideration, but I regret to say it was not followed. Instead, the two boys went trout fishing in Three Gallon Brook, a mile back of school. Dud used flies and got not even a nibble. Jimmy, with a plentiful supply of angle-worms, landed a four-inch sunfish. As no one, so far as they were aware, had ever caught, seen or suspected the presence of a trout in Three Gallon Brook, they were not disappointed. The only feature of the excursion not counted on occurred when Dud slipped from a rock during the effort to free his line from a snag and landed in three feet of extremely cold water. Fortunately that happened after Jimmy had landed his catch and so they were about ready to go home, anyway. Jimmy carried the sunfish back to school dangling from an alder branch. That is, it dangled until they reached the school grounds. Then it was placed tenderly in Jimmy's coat pocket and smuggled to Number 19. When he returned from supper he brought salt, and the fish was fried over the gas—with the door and transom carefully closed

and both windows wide open—and consumed in a peculiarly flabby and underdone condition. Jimmy partook with gusto, or pretended to, but Dud did scant justice to the repast. Jimmy said he was jealous. Gus Weston happened in before the penetrating aroma of the sunfish had been entirely dissipated and asked anxiously what the trouble was. Whereupon Jimmy stopped trying to dislodge a bone that had worked its way in back of his tongue and described movingly the size, ferocious aspect and fighting qualities of that fish, recounting with much detail the long, exhausting struggle incident to its capture. And Weston diplomatically vowed that he believed every word of it; and had either of them a rattling good detective story to lend him?

CHAPTER XV

DUD SERVES THEM UP

BETWEEN Dud and Starling Meyer existed an armed neutrality. They passed with covert glances, avoided each other when possible and doubtless caused some disappointment to a certain element in the school who had been for several weeks eagerly expecting a fracas between the two. The boxing lessons had been abandoned, since, as Jimmy pathetically pointed out, there was no use getting ready for something that couldn't happen. The gloves were returned to their owners, and, robbed of self-defense as a principal interest in life, Jimmy gave his attention to playing baseball. It occurred to him at about this time that it wouldn't look well for Dud to make the first team, even as a substitute, and for him to get chucked back to the second nine. So the Monday after the Portsmouth Grammar School game Jimmy buckled down to make good. Right field seemed the only position open to him, and even to earn that he would have to beat out Harold Boynton, and Boynton, while not an exceptional fielder, was a pretty fair hitter.

Therefore it behooved Jimmy to get busy and learn to "lam 'em out" a bit better. His first step was to attempt to bribe Brunswick and Dud to pitch easy ones when he was at the net. Failing at that, he sighed and set out to conquer by labor. Jimmy always preferred to take short cuts. The longest way around might suit some fellows, but he took it only as a last resort. Having, however, made up his mind to the circuitous journey, Jimmy was capable of settling down to the task and seeing it through.

On Wednesday the second team was again defeated, and on the following Saturday Grafton High School, supported by a large and noisy mob of pennant-flaunting boys and girls, engaged the attention of the first team. The batting order that afternoon gave a line on what was likely to be the final selections: Blake, ss; Murtha, 2b; Parker, cf; Winslow, 3b; Ayer, 1b; Ordway, lf; Boynton, rf; Gordon, c; Myatt or Leddy, p. There might be, probably would be, changes later on in the arrangement of the players for batting purposes, but it was generally conceded that the team as made up that day was practically as it would be six weeks later. It was likely that Ben Myatt would occasionally be played in center field, for Ben, aside from being a remarkable pitcher, was a steady outfielder and a good hitter. There were some critics who sneered

at Hugh Ordway's presence on the nine, hinting at favoritism, and it must be acknowledged that Hugh accomplished little that afternoon to vindicate his selection for the middle-garden position. Hugh had a bad day, missing one easy fly and failing to reach first base once. His muff in the third inning let in two runs and made the outcome doubtful until the sixth, when a single by Guy Murtha with one down, a sacrifice by Parker, a screeching two-base hit by Bert Winslow and an error by third-baseman landed two tallies for the home team.

The score stayed at five to five until the ninth, when the home team started a rally. Bert Winslow, first man up, was passed. Neil Ayer laid a bunt in front of the plate, sending Bert to second and going out himself at first. Mr. Sargent sent Milford to bat in place of Hugh and Milford came through with a clean single that landed him on first. Bert, however, was out at the plate by inches only. With two gone, a second pinch-hitter was sent to the rescue in the person of Gus Weston. As a pinch-hitter Gus was ordinarily something of a joke, but on this occasion he turned the laugh on High School's pitcher, landing on the first offering and sending it down the third-base line for a hit that advanced Milford to second. Gordon followed with a pop-fly that should have been an easy out, but which second

baseman and shortstop managed between them to let fall safe.

With bases full and Nate Leddy up—Myatt had gone through five innings and been sent to the showers—Mr. Sargent took a chance and let Nate go to bat. Evidently the latter was instructed to wait out the pitcher, for he stood idly by while two strikes and two balls went across. Then the coach called him back and Jimmy Logan was sent in to distinguish himself. Anyone but Jimmy would have suffered from nerves, I fancy, for it is something of an ordeal to step up to the plate with two out, bases filled and the pitcher's score two-and-two. But Jimmy approached the task with beautiful assurance. Some said he even swaggered a little. Perhaps he did, and perhaps that swagger was the undoing of the opposing pitcher. At any rate, all Jimmy had to do was dodge two wild deliveries and trot, smilingly, to first, while Milford ambled over the plate with what proved eventually to be the winning run. Nick Blake brought the inning to an end a moment later when he sent a long fly to the outfield.

Grafton High School begrudged that victory and showed it, at the time by the half-hearted way in which they cheered their successful rival, and later by sending a challenge for another contest on High School grounds. The challenge was accepted and a

vacant date a week and a half later was awarded her. Since faculty rules prohibited the team from playing away from the school on Wednesdays during April and May, a special dispensation was asked for and obtained, and the game came off in due time and High School went down in decisive defeat, the score at the end of the seven innings played being 9 to 2 in favor of Grafton.

Before that, however, Leeds High School had administered the first beating to the Scarlet-and-Gray to the tune of 3 to 0. It was a good game and Grafton showed up well in all departments except that of hitting. Leeds' pitcher was a hard proposition and only four scattered hits were registered by Grafton. On the other hand, Leddy, who started in the box for his team, was found for six hits in four innings, one of them a three-bagger, and although Ben Myatt, who relieved him, held the enemy well in hand, the mischief was already done. In the eighth and ninth innings that day Mr. Sargent used every available player in his determined effort to stem the tide of disaster, even Dud getting a chance to show his batting prowess and rapping a liner straight into the hands of shortstop as his contribution to the cause. Jimmy, called into the fray in the eighth, managed to get hit with an inshoot and so, luckily, earned his base. It was Starling Meyer who came nearest to accomplishing any-

thing in the batting line, for Star, after watching two good ones pass him, landed on what was palpably intended for a wide one and managed to drop it behind first base some three inches inside the foul line. Unfortunately there was no one on the bases to take advantage of the miracle.

As a result of the Leeds game there followed, beginning on the next Monday afternoon, a series of batting practices that for the rest of the week, barring Wednesday and Saturday, left no time for lineups. There also followed a change in the batting order and a slight shakeup of the team. Bert Winslow took Guy Murtha's place as second batter, Guy following him and Parker slipping into fourth position. Gordon and Boynton also changed locations. Milford was tried out at first and for the next three weeks he and Neil Ayer had a very lively struggle for the first sack. Eventually Ayer came into his own again, although had batting ability alone entered into it Milford would undoubtedly have won the place. Jimmy got several opportunities to show what he could do in right field and Starling Meyer received some recognition in center. Southlake Academy was defeated on the nineteenth at Southlake, Gus Weston pitching for once a remarkably steady game until he was taken out in the seventh. By that time the contest was on ice and Coach Sargent sent Brunswick in for a couple of innings of experience.

Experience came his way, too, to the tune of four hits for a total of six bases, but luckily only one run resulted.

Track and field sports were by now engaging much of the school's interest. The team had held its handicap games the last of April, had defeated St. James Academy the week before and was at present very busily at work getting into condition to meet Mount Morris, Grafton's principal rival, on the twenty-sixth. Over on the big oval ribbon of gray-blue cinders the twenty-odd youths who wore the scarlet-and-gray stripe across their chests or who hoped to wear it after next Saturday, sprinted and ran and hurdled, while about the jumping pits a dozen or fifteen others strove mightily with shot and hammer and vaulting-pole or worked zealously at the jumps. Nowadays the audience at the first team diamond was smaller each afternoon, and one heard much learned talk of dual records, and the names of Zanetti and Tray and Keyes and Yetter and Musgrave and many others pursued one from breakfast to bedtime. "Dinny" Crowley divided his time as best he could between Track Team and second nine, while Davy Richards, at last really in his element, loomed large in importance. Davy had a reputation as a trainer of track and field talent to vindicate and Davy in the process of vindicating was a fine imitation of a tyrant. Even Mr.

Sargent forsook baseball for a space each day and gave his attention to the weight men and jumpers, for "Pete" in his day had held a college record for two years with the hammer and had, as a side issue, leaped his twenty-two feet-odd for the honor of the Blue. So for one week at least baseball took a back seat at Grafton and the real heroes were the slim-waisted, bare-legged chaps in fluttering white trunks.

The ball team met Middleboro High School on Wednesday afternoon and had no trouble in winning a 14 to 3 contest that offered little in the way of excitement or suspense to the listless spectators. It was an intolerably hot day for May and audience and players alike drooped. For Grafton, Nate Leddy started the twirling, but after his teammates had scored eight runs on the opponents in five innings Nate ambled off and Joe Kelly tried his hand. Joe was not a success, for the enemy took most kindly to his slants, and after facing two innings of trouble Joe likewise retired and Dud was given his first taste of hostile batsmen.

With the score 12 to 3, Dud was not expected to kill himself, and Ed Brooks, who had taken Gordon's place behind the plate with the advent of Kelly on the mound, was all for an easy life. But Brooks was reckoning without Dud's ambition to win a place on the list of battery candidates. Dud had warmed the bench and twirled his glove during

so many games that this opportunity presented itself to him as Heaven-sent and he resolved to use all the skill he knew and all the control he possessed. For a fortnight he had been experimenting with his curves again and, at Ben Myatt's suggestion, had even attempted a side-arm delivery that looked promising. He had little fear of being punished much, but he went to the mound and picked up the ball determined to deny any sort of a hit to the opponents. That is why he shook his head so frequently at his catcher, much to that gentleman's surprise, and why when Middleboro's tail-enders faced him in that first of the eighth he worked so carefully and cunningly that one after another the three last batters on the list retired without even fouling-off a ball! The Middleboro pitcher stood like a graven image while Dud shot two fast ones over the outer corner of the rubber, wasted one for luck and then ended the inning with a slow ball that floated as perfectly over the center as though it had been rolled on wires! For the first time during the game the somnolent spectators showed enthusiasm as Dud dropped the ball and made for the bench. Brooks squeezed in beside him and thumped him on the knee.

"Great work, Dud!" he said. "We made 'em look like pikers, didn't we?"

"You!" laughed Parker, sitting next him. "What

did you do, Eddie? Baker scratched every signal you gave him!"

"Me?" asked Brooks sarcastically. "Oh, nothing! I just held him, that's all! You get up there and put your mitt against some of Dud's fast ones and see how simple it is! Say, Dud, it would be fine if we could send them down in the next inning the same way, eh? Only thing is, that fellow Dollard, who bats second, is a pretty good hitter. He's made two already out of three times up."

"What's the first fellow like?" asked Dud.

"Chapman? I guess that's his name. Plays third. Oh, he's not dangerous. He wants his base. Sneak over the first one for a strike and then tease him a couple of times with high ones. He'll go after them every time. But Dollard's not so easy. He waits for the good ones."

"Then we'll have to see that he doesn't get them," replied Dud simply.

"Well, if you can keep on working the corners the way you did last inning you're all right. That ump has his eyesight with him. If he didn't you'd get the worst of it lots of times."

Grafton tallied twice more in her half of the eighth and then Dud went back to the mound and faced the small and stocky third-baseman. But he wasn't hard. Once Dud thought he had lost his wish, but the ball rolled foul before it reached the

third sack. After that there was no more trouble. Chapman, if that was his name, bit at a high one and missed it badly, let a ball go by and then again swung too late at a fast one that crossed the plate and retired disgruntled to the bench.

But Dollard was more canny. Dollard had to have good ones. Dud tried him on two that looked fair until they broke, but the batter treated them with contempt. Then Dud tried him out with a slow one and caught him napping. Dollard fouled the next one into the stand and the score was two-and-two. Brooks signaled for a straight one, hoping to finish him off, but Dud shook his head. Instead, he changed his position in the box a mite, wrapped his fingers about the ball, wound up, stepped forward and swung his arm wide at the height of his elbow. Brooks had to jump for that ball, for it proved a cross-fire indeed, and there was a perceptible moment of hesitation before the umpire reached his verdict. But when he did he said *"You're out!"* so decisively as to make up for the hesitation. Dollard voiced objections all the way to the bench and let it be known by the manner in which he slammed his bat to earth that he was totally out of sympathy with that umpire! But the crowd cheered the strike-out and jeered the victim and the next batsman stepped to his place.

Then, for once, and for the first time since he had

profited by Ben Myatt's advice, Dud went back to his hooks and that third batter swung and dodged and swung again while Dud brought the game to an end with exactly four deliveries!

Two days later there came the final cut in the first squad and six disappointed candidates were turned over to the second team. One of the six was a pitcher, but his name was not Baker. It was Kelly.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TRACK MEET

IT was Saturday afternoon and Dud, squeezed into a seat on the little grandstand between Roy Dresser and Ernest Barnes, was watching the Track and Field Meeting of Grafton and Mount Morris. The baseball crowd had gone off to play the Rotan College Freshman Team and by what Dud considered a horrible error of judgment on the part of the coach he had not been taken along. Of course, he hadn't expected to pitch even one inning against the college nine, but he did think that Mr. Sargent might have included him among the substitutes. How was a fellow to learn if he didn't watch the team play? And to add to his sense of injury, Jimmy had actually accompanied the nine to play right field! Of course that was only because Boynton was entered in the athletic meet and someone had to take his place, but it didn't make Dud any more reconciled. There were moments when he almost wished that the team would run up against the defeat that was predicted for it!

Still, those moments were of the past, for during

the last half-hour Dud had been far too excited over the events taking place before his eyes to recall the injustice done him. The sprints, the half-mile, the high hurdles, the shot-put and the high jump had been decided and the rivals were within two points of each other, Mount Morris leading with 28. Just now nine eager youths, four wearing the green-and-white of Mount Morris and five the scarlet-and-gray of Grafton, were awaiting the pistol at the start of the quarter-mile and Dud's eyes were riveted on them. Warren Yetter, on whom Grafton's hopes rested, was the second man from the pole and, oddly enough, Kirkwell, the Mount Morris crack, was at his right elbow. Dud could see them talking to each other smilingly, but for all of that a bit constrainedly. Then the nine bodies poised, there was an instant's silence and the sharp report of the starting pistol sounded on the still air. The runners leaped away, jockeyed for positions in the first dozen strides and swept past the stand like frightened deer. Dud was on his feet, and so too were all those around him. Inarticulate sounds made a background for the strident shouts and yells of encouragement. Along the grass a Mount Morris youth, an official of some sort, raced beside the runners, dangling a white sweater with a broad green band on it, yelping and urging. Now they were at the first corner, Kirkwell leading and Yetter

a yard behind him. Tenney, of Grafton, strove to pass Yetter on the outside and was followed closely by a Mount Morris runner. At the next corner the first four were strung out and hugging the rim: Kirkwell, Yetter, Tenney and Number 54. Dud sought hurriedly for his program to discover the identity of Number 54, realized the next moment that he didn't care, swept his gaze back across the field quickly and joined his voice in the roar that swept from the stand. Yetter was sprinting gamely now. Only a yard separated him from Kirkwell. Tenney was certain of third place. The finish was only a few yards away. Yetter crept up and up! The shouts increased. The stand was a pandemonium. The officials, packed about the finish line, were waving and shouting, too, all but the judges and timers. Yetter and Kirkwell swept to the line side by side! Or did they? Wasn't the Mount Morris man a little ahead as they disappeared behind the group there? The tumult had quieted, but now it broke forth again and the shouting came from the other end of the stand. Across the field a half-dozen jubilant Mount Morris fellows were tossing their hats in air and signaling victory!

"That was a peach of a finish," said Roy Dresser, with a sigh of relief. "Warren almost had him."

"That puts them another point ahead," said Dud,

grudgingly crediting Mount Morris with 5. "Gee, I thought Yetter was supposed to have the four-forty cinched!"

"I guess he ran it inside his best time," replied Roy. "Kirkwell was better, that's all."

The announcer was bawling forth the result: "Four-Hundred-and-Forty-Yards-Run! Won by C. J. Kirkwell, Mount Morris! W. H. Yetter, Grafton, second; A. L. Tenney, Grafton, third. Time, 52 3-5 seconds!"

"Wow!" exclaimed Roy. "That's a fifth better than the dual record! I told you Warren was going some!"

Dud tried to glean comfort from the fact, but those five points stared at him obstinately. They were putting the low hurdles across the cinder for the final heat, while at the end of the oval lithe forms sprang in air to waft themselves over the bar nearly ten feet above the ground or to go, doubled up like an animated jack-knife, flying into the brown loam of the jumping pit. Behind the stand the hammer-throwers were still busy. Dud watched Jim Quinn launch himself upward with his long pole, straighten a tense body and drop across the trembling bar and sighed with relief. The pole vault might decide the meeting and so far Quinn was more than holding his own.

Musgrave and Keyes, of Grafton, and Torrey

and Capper, of the rival school, crouched far up the track. At the finish a handkerchief waved. The four figures set, straightened and leaped away from their marks and the sound of the pistol followed them. Down they came, stride, stride, stride, leap; Torrey gaining between hurdles, Keyes pulling him back at the timbers; Musgrave and Capper falling behind but fighting gamely for third place. On and on to the growing roar of the excited watchers, hurdle after hurdle falling behind. Torrey well in advance now, but Keyes pushing him for every ounce of strength in his body. Two more hurdles left. Torrey is over! Keyes is over! A mad race for the final obstacle, Torrey again gaining on the flat, but Keyes, head back, feet twinkling, only a yard behind. Up again and over, almost side by side at the next stride. Then the dash to the string, Torrey, arms upthrown, breaking it a stride ahead of Keyes! Mount Morris shouts wildly and Grafton joins, for Ned Musgrave has beaten out his rival handily and again the points go five to Mount Morris and four to Grafton, and Mount Morris had been conceded first and third places!

Dud is a trifle comforted as he sinks back to his seat and scratches agitatedly with his stubby pencil. Barnes, munching chocolate philosophically, asks the score.

"Thirty-eight to thirty-four," replies Dud.

"We're a goner then."

"We are not! Wait till the mile run comes off! Foster Tray will win that at a walk, and we may get second place too."

"Yes, and Mount Morris will win the broad jump and the hammer." Barnes pushes the last of the chocolate between stained lips and wipes sticky fingers on a dingy handkerchief. "Say, I wonder how the baseball game is coming out."

"We'll get licked. Here come the milers. Who's the fellow in the blue and yellow bathrobe, Roy?"

"Milton. He ought to do pretty well. He ran fifth last year and they say he's a lot faster now. I don't see——"

"The bar is now at nine feet, ten and one-half inches!" announces a voice, and they turn their gaze to see a Mount Morris youth rise in air, straighten and come hurtling to earth with the bar on top of him.

"So sorry," murmurs Roy Dresser. "Hope he does it again next time."

The megaphone artist trots into the middle of the arena and faces the stand, a slip of paper in his hand. The voices are stilled as he places the scarlet horn to his mouth. "At the end of the fifth inning——"

Deep silence now!

"—At Rotan the score stands: Grafton 5——"

An outburst of cheers, quickly stilled.

"—Rotan 11!"

A moment of gloom, broken by ironical cheers from the Mount Morris end of the stand.

"What do you know about that?" asks Dud wonderingly. "They must have hammered Myatt for fair! Eleven to five! Gee!"

"What I want to know," observes Barnes, "is how we got five!"

Dud observes him in faint disgust. "Oh, I suppose they gave them to us! Don't you think we can play ball at all?"

"I didn't think we could hit that fellow Gibbs," Barnes answers carelessly. "He's a wonder, you know."

"Well, even wonders have their off days. I guess Myatt had one today! Gee, eleven runs!"

"I'm just as well pleased I didn't go, Baker. The crowd will be dead sore when they get back. It costs nearly two dollars to make that trip."

"We've just simply got to get this meet," mutters Dud. "We can't get beaten all around today!"

"I've known it to happen," says Roy unfeelingly. "Here they go! Must be two dozen of 'em!"

In truth there were exactly fourteen, about evenly divided between the two schools. They hustled away confusedly and went to the corner weaving in

and out, slowing their strides. Four times around a quarter-mile track is no pleasure jaunt and they knew it. Foster Tray was well in the rear of the bunch and he stayed there as long as the pace suited him, but at the finish of the first lap he had crawled up to third place, with Towne, of Mount Morris, and Milton, of Grafton, leading in that order. The field was already strung out, for the pace had been fairly fast for the tyros. In the backstretch a Mount Morris youth sprinted from the center of the first bunch and swept into the lead, no one disputing him. But he lasted only to the beginning of the home-stretch and when the leaders came past the stand again Towne was first and Tray second. Milton was back in fourth place, behind a teammate. Then came three Mount Morris fellows and, after them, a straggling line of pluggers.

The time was shouted to them as they went by, but there was too much shouting from the stand for Dud to hear it. At the next corner Milton hustled past the third runner and fell in behind Tray, and Grafton cheered that indication of pluck. But by the time the backstretch was once more ahead Towne and Tray were yards to the good and both Milton and the man behind him were losing ground. There was no sign of weariness shown by either of the leaders. Towne was running a fine, steady race and seemed well within himself. Tray, not so pretty

a runner, looked to be tiring, but he kept his position to the fraction of an inch, a single stride behind his rival, his spikes hugging the rim closely. Around the corners they came, into the stretch, to a chorus of cheers and shouts and shrill yells of advice, entreaty and encouragement. The gong clanged its announcement of the final lap. Fifteen yards or so behind the two leaders came Milton, fighting doggedly to keep ahead of a Mount Morris youth but losing gradually. By this time the track showed tired contestants everywhere. Towne and Tray were already lapping the rear-guard.

Stride for stride, the green ribbon and the scarlet passed the turns and reached the back stretch. There was still no sign of a change of pace, no altering of the steady strides. Now they were halfway through the final circuit, moving together across the green turf like a single machine. But suddenly cries leapt from the watchers. Towne had started his sprint! Already a yard separated the two! And now it was a good two strides! They were rounding the third corner, heads back, digging for all they were worth! Tray was falling behind! The spectators in the stand were on their feet, hands outstretched and beckoning, lungs roaring forth shouts of triumph or of despair. Into the stretch the two white-clad figures swept. Surely Tray had pulled up again! He had! He was running stride for

stride with the Mount Morris man! He was gaining! Why, there was nothing to it but Tray! What a sprint! Two yards between them now, three—four! And Tray still opening up daylight and the finish growing nearer and nearer! The stand was emptying, the audience piling down to crowd the track at the finish line. It was difficult to see now, but there was a head bobbing up and down a few yards away, and another——

"Track! Track! Keep back there! Give them room, fellows!"

"Grafton! Grafton! Grafton!"

"Tray! Tray! Tray!"

"Come on, Towne! Mount Morris! Mount Morris!"

"You can do it! Come on! Come on!"

Then a veritable babel of sound as a white-clad runner stumbles into sight at the end of the throng, is caught by ready arms and borne staggering to the turf. Grafton cheers fill the air. Another runner subsides on the grass. Cries of *"Track! Track! Let them finish! Everyone off the track!"* And then Milton, white of face, dragging his unwilling feet beneath him, fighting for breath, crosses the line a scant two yards ahead of a Mount Morris youth and plunges forward on his face. After that they jog in one by one, but no one sees them, for the race is over and Grafton has won first place and

third and added eight much-needed points to her score!

Dud, separated in the confusion of that rush down from the stand from his companion, waited to hear the announcement of the time, hoping to learn that Foster Tray had made a new record for the mile. But four minutes and fifty-four seconds was not sensational, and so he followed the crowd to the pole-vault. The broad jumpers had just finished and Mount Morris had won first place, leaving four points for Grafton, and the figures stood 46 to 44, the Green-and-White still two points ahead. The hammer-throw had not yet been heard from, Dud learned, but Quinn was sure of first in the pole-vault. Dud joined the ranks of the anxious on-lookers and watched while Mount Morris's talent tried and failed to equal Jim Quinn's ten feet and one inch, watched while Hanson of Grafton struggled for third place in the vault-off between him and Joy of Mount Morris and grieved when he lost out. And then, while Dud was figuring and calculating and staring at the unwelcome result which showed Mount Morris still a point ahead, a wildly leaping junior shot around the stand bringing an end to suspense.

Grafton had won first and second place in the hammer-throw! Driver had thrown a hundred and thirty-nine feet and four inches! And Gowen had

done almost as well! And Mount Morris's best was only——

But Dud didn't care what Mount Morris's best had been! He was scrawling a big black 8 on his program and shouting to no one in particular:

"What do you know about that? Grafton, 57; Mount Morris, 51! Well, I guess! Six points to the good! Oh, we're not so bad, not so bad! Fifty-seven to fifty-one! What do you know about that?"

No one heard him, I fancy, for there was a great deal of noise about that time.

CHAPTER XVII

BASEBALL, TENNIS AND OYSTERS

THERE was yet nearly three-quarters of an hour before supper time and Dud, still elated and excited over the track victory, turned his steps to River Street and, skirting the school grounds, swung west and made for the station. The ball team, unless it missed its connection at the Junction, would be in at a quarter to six. Dud was not alone in his journey to the station, for the carriages bearing the Mount Morris athletes passed him half-way along the shaded village road and several boys, fortunate youths living nearby who had procured leave of absence over Sunday, were trailing along, suit-cases in hand. Dud witnessed the departure of the Mount Morris track team and the fellows off for home and then, seated on a baggage-truck, watched the shadows creep down the hillside across the tracks and thought of a great many things. He speculated on what had happened at Rotan to result in Grafton's defeat, wondered whether by any stroke of fortune the Scarlet-and-Gray had redeemed herself in the later innings and

then tried to imagine himself in the box for Grafton, facing those doughty Rotan freshies and mowing them down one-two-three! He couldn't quite visualize the scene, however, and gave up with a sigh. Then he wondered how long it would be before Mr. Sargent would let him start a game, and what would happen when he did! And at that instant there was a whistle far down the track, the few loiterers came to life along the platform and the baggage man requisitioned his truck.

Jimmie was one of the first off the train and was all for returning to school in the barge until Dud reminded him that he had walked all the way over to meet him and didn't propose to pay any fifteen cents to ride back. Whereupon Jimmie good-naturedly set out with his chum on foot.

"Twelve to seven," he answered in reply to Dud's request for the final figures. "What was the matter? Why, nothing much, except that we couldn't hit that pitcher of theirs and they slammed Myatt all over the lot in the third. Why the dickens Pete didn't yank him out I don't know. Maybe it's just as well he didn't, though. I guess they'd have battered Leddy something brutal. Those dubs sure can hit the pill, son!"

"How did you get on?" asked Dud.

"Rotten, thanks! I muffed a peach of a fly and let two runs cross, worse luck! It was in that awful

third. The sun got square in my eyes just at the last moment. I had the old thing sighted nicely until I had to drop my hands to make the catch. Then it went plum through 'em. There were three on bases and so two of them scored. The other one could have, too, if he'd had any sense, for it took me about ten seconds to find the ball after I muffed it. But the fellow slowed up at third and by that time it was too late."

"Did you hit any?"

"I got one, and it was a corker. I'd have had two bases on it if Blake hadn't held me up at first, the chump! I wasn't awfully strong with the stick, Dud, but I got a base every time I went up!"

"You did? How, for pity's sake?"

"Well, the first time I rolled one in front of base and the catcher threw to second to get Ordway. He didn't, though, for Hobo's a regular flash on the bases, and we were both safe. The next time I got pinked in the arm, the next time I hit between short and third—some little sizzler, that was, old scout!—and the last time I worked Mr. Pitcher for a pass."

"Gee, you're a lucky chap," said Dud enviously.

"Lucky? Nothing of the sort. Brains, son, brains! Besides, do you call it lucky to have a long, easy fly go right through your fingers? Huh! Luck didn't do anything for little Jimmy today!

Say, how'd the meet come out? Heard we'd won it, but what was the score?"

They talked track meeting until the campus was reached and then Dud returned to the subject of the ball game. "They tried Star Meyer in center for a couple of innings; Parker got his leg spiked and Star wasn't so bad. Made a pretty catch of a long one that went nearly to the fence and managed to beat out a bunt in the ninth. I suppose the first thing I know I'll have to down him as well as Boynton."

Dud looked surprised. "Do you think you've got a show, Jimmy?" he inquired.

"Why not?" asked the other, bristling. "Boynton's not much better than I am. He muffs 'em, too, now and then. Of course, he's hitting better, but I'll wager he doesn't get to first any oftener. But if they go and lug Star into the business, why, that's different. I can't win out against the whole school!"

"But you say they played Star in center. And you're after right, aren't you?"

"I'm after anything I can get, son. A fellow who can play center can play right or left, can't he? An outfielder's just an outfielder, you see, and you can't play more than three of 'em at a time—and get away with it. Just now there are about six of us, all trying for three jobs. I wish Star Meyer

would go soak his head and not butt in on baseball!"

Dud laughed. "You might suggest it to him, Jimmy. Who pitched besides Myatt? Did Brunswick get in?"

"Nobody. Ben went the distance. They couldn't touch him much after that rotten third. Got a couple of hits in the fifth and about one each inning after that. They made their last run in the eighth with two down. A fellow cracked a two-bagger down the left foul-line and tried to steal third, and did it because Winslow let the ball drop. Then the next fellow hit an easy one to Ayer and Myatt didn't cover base in time and the chap on third scrambled in. I guess it was just as well Pete didn't derrick Ben, after all, because he certainly pitched a corking game after that third inning. Gee, but I'm hungry! Wish I was at training table," he added wistfully. "They get steaks there!"

They went over to Nick Blake's room after supper and found Hugh and Bert and Guy Murtha there, and there was much baseball talked and many "might-have-beens" discussed. Dud, as a non-participant, had little to say, and Hugh, who might have talked a good deal since he had rather distinguished himself by his work at the bat and on the bases, was almost as silent. After awhile, on the excuse of showing Dud a new book, Hugh led the

other off upstairs and they settled down full-length on the window-seat, beside the open casements, and had a fine, chummy talk. Dud could talk well enough when there was but a single listener, and tonight Hugh found the younger boy far from dull. By the time Bert Winslow came in, yawning, they had discovered numerous bonds of sympathy such as mutual likes and dislikes and an intense desire to make good at baseball. Hugh, entering the game as the veriest tyro and with a deal of doubt and not much enthusiasm, was now a rabid "fan" and almost amusingly eager to make a name for himself.

Bert, I think, wanted to go to bed, but was too polite to start while there was a visitor present, and so toppled into a chair and joined the conversation. Dud realized that Bert didn't care very much for him and so tried to get away a few minutes after the other's advent, but Hugh wouldn't have it.

"Oh, sit down and behave yourself, Baker! It isn't late. I say, Bert, Baker and I have been discovering that we have lots of things in common, if you know what I mean."

"Really?" Bert stifled a yawn. "Such as what, 'Ighness?"

"Oh, baseball, for one, you know. Tennis, too. And oysters——"

"Oysters!"

"Yes. You see I happened to think that a dozen nice cold raw oysters would taste corking. They would, wouldn't they?"

"Out of season, you chump."

"Never! That's only prejudice, old chap. Well, anyway, oysters was one thing—*were* one thing, I should say. English is beastly confusing at times, eh? And then we found that Baker knew my part of the country, down Maryland way, you know. He comes from Delaware."

"So would I," laughed Bert.

"Delaware," replied Dud, smiling, "is small but select. Where's your home, Winslow?"

"Pennsylvania; Shrevesport. Know it?"

Dud shook his head. "Some of my folks lived in Pennsylvania once, a good many years ago."

"It's a good state. They were foolish to leave it," yawned Bert. "Hope they didn't have to?"

"Why, in a way I believe they did. You see one of them was an officer in the American Army, and when Howe occupied Philadelphia they thought it might not be healthy."

"Oh," said Bert. Hugh smiled.

"Still," continued Bert, "they needn't have gone to Delaware, eh?"

"I don't think they did just then. A couple of them were with Washington at Valley Forge. I think the women went to New Jersey until Philadel-

phia was evacuated again. I don't know just what happened then. We've been living in Delaware only since my grandfather's time. He moved there from Philadelphia to improve his state."

"Improve his state? You mean he was—was hard up?" asked Bert suspiciously.

"I can't say. I've been told it was to improve his state. That's all I know."

Hugh laughed. "You began it, Bert! Honors are even. As judge of the debate, I declare it a draw."

Bert smiled slowly. Then: "All right, Baker," he said amiably, "you win! Fact is, I don't know anything about Delaware or a thing against it. Sorry if I trod on your toes."

"You didn't, Winslow; I moved them out of the way," laughed Dud.

After the latter had taken his departure and the two roommates were preparing for bed, Hugh heard a grunt from the opposite chamber. "What's troubling you?" he called.

"Nothing," was the answer. "I was just thinking that that kid isn't such a fool, after all, eh?"

"Well," replied Hugh, winking at himself in the glass, "I rather fancy he had you, old top."

Bert's only response was another grunt, but it sounded assenting.

CHAPTER XVIII

DUD GOES TO THE RESCUE

GRAFTON had now played seven contests with outside teams and had won five and lost two. Six games remained; seven in case it became necessary to play a third game with Mount Morris. On the whole the nine had showed average strength. The pitching had been good and defensively the team had more than held its own against contenders. But both Coach Sargent and Captain Murtha would have been anything but displeased if the batting had been heavier or had even shown promise of improvement. The remaining games were all, with the exception of that with Yarrow High School, scheduled just before the second Mount Morris contest, hard ones. St. James Academy especially was looked on as a difficult opponent, and Lawrence Textile School as scarcely less dangerous. Both teams boasted pitchers of reputation, and unless Grafton's stick work improved she was not likely to pile up much of a score against either visitor. Of course, it could be argued that a team with a perfect defense is in no danger of defeat, but

on the other hand, a team with no power of attack can't win games. And Guy Murtha, being captain and in his last year at school, naturally wanted very much to come off victor in those remaining contests. Fortunately, the St. James and Lawrence Textile games were to be played on Lothrop Field, a circumstance which would aid to some extent. The meeting with Corliss College was to be played away from home, but Corliss—or Careless, as the Graftonians liked to call it—while strong, was not the problem that either of the other two was. As for Yarrow High—well, that was only a practice game to fill in between the first Mount Morris engagement on the ninth of June, which was a Saturday, and the second one, which fell on the following Friday, the Mount Morris Class Day. In case each of the ancient rivals secured a game the play-off would be at Grafton the next day, the teams remaining after the close of the schools to settle the controversy.

On the Monday succeeding their defeat at Rotan the players were given a particularly strenuous afternoon of it. With the exception of Gordon Parker, whose leg still protested at the injury done it by a Rotan baseman's spikes, all the players were out and not one was spared, unless we exempt Ben Myatt. Dud put in a hard afternoon, for he pitched six innings for the scrubs and was fairly well ham-

mered. Still, he managed to keep the hits of the regulars so well scattered that Mr. Sargent was satisfied to leave him on the mound until, in the seventh, it became advisable to let a pinch hitter take his place. After that Weston finished up for the scrubs and was so erratic that the one-run lead handed over to him by Dud soon vanished, the regulars winning out by the score of 9 to 6. When Dud heard the result in the Field House later he tried to be sorry for Weston, but the effort wasn't very successful. Dud, you see, was already entertaining visions of pitching a half-game or so against Mount Morris and thus winning his letter. Not that the letter part of it interested him so much, however. Just the glory of being in a Mount Morris game would be enough for him. Of course, he couldn't figure out as yet just how that desirable result was to come about. There was Ben Myatt for the first game and Nate Leddy for the second, or the other way around, with Weston to take a hand if needed. As for Brunswick, Dud wasn't worrying about him. Brunswick was keeping along at about the same pace he had begun the season on, neither worse nor better, while Dud could honestly assure himself that he was improving from day to day, or, at least, from game to game. And he didn't have to rely wholly on his own verdict, for others had seen the improvement and told him of it. Ben Myatt

had praised him warmly, Captain Murtha had had a good word more than once and Mr. Sargent had let Dud see that he wasn't blind to the latter's growing ability.

But Dud was forced to presuppose a third game in the big series before he could see himself turning back the Mount Morris hitters, and a third game might not materialize. Of course, if Gus Weston kept on blowing up every time he went into the points, why, that would improve Dud's chances a whole lot, and it was this thought that made it difficult for Dud to grieve over the loss of that game to the scrubs! With Weston out of the way——

But Weston was an old hand, had been pitching for three years and was just as likely to steady down again the next time and send his stock soaring again. All that was to be done, reflected Dud, was to hope for the best—which, from Gus Weston's point of view, was the worst!—and keep right on getting better and better every day. He didn't wish anyone ill luck, but if only Leddy might have a slight attack of measles or something and Gus Weston develop a bum wing—well, Dud was forced to admit that it would be Providential!

But the measles didn't afflict Leddy nor did Weston complain of trouble in his arm, and practice went on each day and Dud pitched or didn't pitch but always stood in front of the net and took his turn

at "looking like a silly goat," to use his own expression, while he tried to connect with the puzzling offerings of Leddy or Weston or Brunswick.

St. James descended like a wolf on the fold on Wednesday and took Grafton's measure without a great deal of trouble. To be sure, the game went to the fifth inning before St. James solved Leddy's slants and by that time Grafton had herself assailed the opposing twirler for three hits and scored one run. But when the visitors did take to Leddy's ways they took enthusiastically. Nate got through the fifth with difficulty, some brainless base-running on the part of the enemy aiding him out of a tight place, but in the sixth, after the bases were filled with only one out and two runs already across, he was retired from service and Myatt went in to save the day. And Myatt might have done it had he been backed by errorless fielding, but Nick Blake booted one in the seventh and Ayer fumbled a heave a minute later and two more runs came over. Grafton managed to add to her score in the eighth, increasing it to two when Winslow cracked out a two-bagger after Nick Blake had been passed to first and had stolen second. But that was the last of the home team's scoring, while, just to clinch the game, St. James broke through with a couple of hits, one good for two bases, and added a fifth run in the ninth. Grafton tried everything she knew in the

effort to start a rally in the last half of that inning, but the best she could do was to get Ayer as far as third base, at which station he remained while Hugh Ordway reached first on a weak infield hit that bounded erratically, and Jimmy, batting for Boynton, hit into a double, his luck for once deserting him. So 5 to 2 was the final score, and it pretty fairly represented the merits of the two teams. St. James had been there with the hits when hits meant runs and Grafton had failed to show any attack worthy the name. In view of results, it was cold comfort to know that, outside two errors and a wild pitch by Leddy, she had played an excellent defensive game. Results were what counted and another defeat had been scored up against Grafton.

That game came off on the last day but one in May, and on Friday June came in with a spell of torrid weather. The heat combined with the knowledge of impending final examinations tended to rather take the starch out of fellows, and the ball players were no exception. Practice became half-hearted, in spite of Guy Murtha's impassioned pleas and scoldings, and when Saturday dawned things looked bad for Grafton as regarded that Lawrence Textile contest. Most of the fellows were pulling their feet behind them and wearing worried frowns. The mercury climbed up to eighty-four at noon that day and what breeze had made life bearable in the forenoon

died away entirely. Lawrence arrived shortly after one o'clock and, after getting a taste of conditions in the region of Grafton, willingly consented to a postponement of the start of the game from two-thirty to three o'clock. The delay, however, was of not much avail, for at the half-hour it was just as hot as it had been at two-thirty, and the spectators went to the field armed with newspapers and fans and all sorts of devices to shield their perspiring countenances.

Coach Sargent again altered the batting order. Parker, while probably able to get in, was not used and Jimmy took his place in center field. Hugh Ordway went to third place on the list and Jimmy to seventh. Ben Myatt started the game, with Gordon behind the bat. Lawrence's twirler was a tall, able-looking chap of about twenty years, unless appearances were deceptive, named Fairway. Nick Blake was responsible for an excruciating pun when, during Grafton's third time at bat, he confided to Jimmy that it looked as if that pitcher was in a fair way to beat them. Jimmy charitably assumed that Nick was affected by the heat. Up to that time neither team had presented more than three men at the plate in an inning, the two pitchers going very smoothly and working the corners for all they were worth. But in that last of the third the luck broke for the home team.

Jimmy, surviving Nick's pun, chose a likely bat and took his stand. Being first man up, it was required of Jimmy that he secure his base by any method short of robbery. Fairway sneaked the first one over on him and teased him with a slow ball, which Jimmy wisely let pass. After that an attempt to bunt resulted in a foul down the third-base side. With two against him, Jimmy took a firmer grip of his bat and bent all his energies to the task. Naturally, Fairway could afford to waste a ball, and did so, and it was two-and-two. Jimmy took heart. The next one looked good and he swung briskly. Another foul resulted, the first-baseman almost making the catch. Another offering curved up to him and again he laid his bat against it and again it went foul. Fairway dragged his sleeve across his perspiring face, had a good look at the signals and unlimbered. The ball shot in, knee-high and looking good, and Jimmy started his swing. But something warned him in time and he recovered just as the ball took a most deceptive drop in front of the plate.

"Ball—three!" called the umpire. Jimmy grinned and hitched his trousers. From the bench came encouraging and approving cries. Jimmy stepped out of the box and wiped his damp hands in the dust. Then he wiped them on his trousers. Then he stepped back with bat poised.

"All right, Fairy!" called the catcher. "Right over now, old man!"

Jimmy's smile broadened. "Fairy" was such an amusing title for that tall, husky youth down there! Then the ball was singing up to him, his bat was swinging at it, there was a *slap* and Jimmy was legging it to first. But again he had fouled, and again the Fates that rule over the lives of such as James Townsend Logan came to his rescue. The catcher, running back with gaze set skyward, hands poised for the descending ball, managed at the last instant to get the sun's rays fairly in his eyes. The ball struck his mitten, bounded out, was juggled and dropped to the sod. A shrill shout of joy arose from the Grafton bench. The catcher angrily sped the ball to third and looked for his mask in a very disgruntled manner. Jimmy held it out to him.

"Hard luck," said Jimmy consolingly. "Next time I'll put it where you can catch it."

The Lawrence backstop grunted.

That trifling incident proved psychological, as many trifling incidents do in baseball, and Fairway's next attempt at a strike passed a foot wide of the base, and Jimmy, dropping his bat, trotted to base amidst the plaudits and laughter of the spectators. The coachers got busy on the instant, Captain Murtha at first and Bert Winslow at third, and sent a

veritable fusillade of interesting remarks across the diamond.

"On your toes, Jimmy! Take a lead! Watch his arm! Look out! Up again! At a boy! Here we go! Go on! Go on! *Who-oa!*"

Jimmy, hooking a leg back to the bag, grinned, climbed to his feet again, shook the dust from his togs and inched along the base line. Fairway gave him up after two attempts and turned his attention to Pete Gordon. Gordon was there to sacrifice, of course, and the safest way to do it was to bunt. But Pete was the slugging kind of a hitter, the sort who doesn't very frequently connect, but slams out wicked liners or screeching flies when he does. Bunting, therefore, was not his strong suit, and his two attempts failed, the first one going foul and the second resulting in a harmless swing against the atmosphere. After that, with two strikes against him and only one ball to his credit, Pete was not dangerous, and when he finally hit one it arched amiably into center fielder's hands and Jimmy retraced his steps to first.

Myatt, however, did better, for Ben landed against the second delivery and whizzed it over the pitcher's upraised glove and safely into the field, and Jimmy slid to second unhurriedly. Nick Blake went out on strikes, and it was Bert Winslow who came through with the longed-for safety, rapping

the ball straight down first base line and a yard to the right of the baseman's best reach. Jimmy scampered home, Myatt reached third, and Bert managed to get to second ahead of right fielder's throw. But that ended Grafton's chances for the time, for the best Hugh could do was to lift a fly to short left that shortstop got after a run.

At one to nothing the game went to the fifth, Myatt holding the enemy harmless in the fourth and Grafton failing to reach first base in her half. But in the first of the fifth a fumble by Winslow put a runner on first. Myatt struck out the next two batsmen and Grafton's adherents began to breathe easier. But Fairway, the Lawrence twirler, who had fanned ingloriously the time before, took a liking to Myatt's first offering and poked it straight between Blake and Winslow. Result, an eager youth on third casting longing eyes at the plate! Also, an equally anxious runner on second, Fairway having gone on to that sack during the throw to the plate.

Myatt started in with the head of the opposing batting list by putting himself promptly in the hole, pitching three remarkably poor balls one after another. Then he got two strikes across, neither of which was offered at, and tried to follow it with a third. But the heat was beginning to tell on Myatt, and the next attempt, while it looked pretty good

from the bench, was adjudged a ball and the bases were full.

"Weston," called Mr. Sargent, "get a ball! You, too, Baker."

Possibly the sight of the two relief pitchers and Brooks trudging off to warm up put Myatt on his mettle, for he fairly stood the next batsman on his ear, fanning him with just four deliveries while the Grafton sympathizers cheered and yelped. Three disappointed runners left as many bases and turned sadly to their positions.

Grafton tried hard to add to her score in her half of the fifth, but Fairway was quite master of the situation. The sixth passed without a thrill, even if Lawrence did manage to work a pass and get a scratch hit. Nothing came of it, for Blake, Murtha and Ayer pulled off a double and stopped the rampage. For Grafton, Winslow, Ordway and Murtha went out in order.

The seventh witnessed Myatt's Waterloo. For several innings he had been in bad shape owing to the heat, and when he faced the first batsman in the seventh it was not difficult to see that he was working on pure nerve. When the first man had found him for a single and he had pitched three balls to the second, Murtha stepped over and held a conference. Myatt shook his head and Bert Winslow joined them. Over behind third Gus Weston and

Dud had taken up their work again, and Will Brunswick had been sent to join them.

"There's a job open for somebody," remarked Brooks, throwing the ball to Gus. "Ben's quitting."

The three pitchers, their backs to the bench, never turned, but three pairs of ears were, you may be certain, very alert. It was Weston who was summoned, and Gus, throwing aside his sweater, which he had worn tied across his chest, lolled onto the field. Dud watched him enviously, first because he had been chosen to relieve Myatt and secondly because he was able to approach the honor with such a wonderful assumption of indifference!

Weston pitched his trial deliveries, rather wildly as a matter of fact, received the intelligence that the batter had three balls to his credit and no strikes, and instantly supplied him with a fourth! The Lawrence coaches and the Lawrence players on the bench hooted and jeered joyfully as the batsman walked to first, the runner on first jogged down to second. But that was what might have been expected, that pass to the batter, for it is no mean task to go to the mound with the score three against you and keep the batsman from walking. Dud had to acknowledge that as he and Brunswick and Brooks retired to the thin strip of shade afforded by the little house in which were stored the tennis nets.

But this was not Weston's day. To Grafton's

dismay, Gus very promptly passed the third man, working only one strike against him, and behold, the bases were filled and there were no outs! So suddenly can the fortunes of battle shift in the game of baseball! Brooks, his gaze on the bench, jumped to his feet.

"Come on, fellows!" he said. "At it again! Peter signaled."

"Gee," murmured Brunswick, "I don't see much use warming up a day like this! I haven't a square inch on me that's dry!"

"Never mind your troubles, Willie; shoot 'em!" responded Brooks, grinning as he drew his mitt on. "One of you guys will have to go in there in about two shakes. They're holding the game now for you to limber up your old arms. Shoot 'em, Dud!"

Over on the diamond Captain Murtha and Bert Winslow and Nick Blake had surrounded the unfortunate Weston, Pete Gordon, ball in hand, standing guard at the plate. A faint breeze came up from the river and awakened murmurs of relief from the sweltering spectators. Lawrence demanded that the game go on, half a dozen impetuous youths leaping from the bench to confront the umpire. The group in the center of the diamond melted and Weston held up his hand for the ball. Gordon tossed it back to him, knelt and signaled.

"All right, Gus, now?" he encouraged. "Make

'em good, old man! Let's get this one! Slide 'em over!"

The infielders crept up to short-field, the runners capered and took daring leads and the coachers shouted themselves hoarse. Gus wound up and shot the ball away. It dropped prettily across the base, but the batter refused it and the umpire upheld him.

"Ball!" announced the latter. Weston, hands on bent knees, stared as though dumfounded. Then he straightened, turned on his heel and cast his arms derisively apart. Lawrence jeered enjoyably.

"Pretty good, Gus," called Gordon. "Never mind, though. Let's have it this time!"

But Weston, though he took time and pains, shot one in that sent the batsman staggering out of his box and sent Guy Murtha to the mound. "That'll do, Gus," said Guy. "This isn't your day, old man."

"It's so beastly hot," grumbled Weston.

Murtha nodded non-committingly and raised a hand. At the bench Mr. Sargent turned to Nate Leddy. "Better warm up," he said. "We may need you. Send Baker in."

CHAPTER XIX

BACK TO THE BENCH

THE coach met Dud at third. He appeared smiling and unworried, but his characteristic trick of jumbling his words betrayed the fact that he was not as calm as he looked.

"Think you can go in there and pull us out of this mess, Baker?" he asked. "Take all the time you want and set your gignals right—I mean get your rignals sight—er—well, go ahead, my boy, and show what you can do!"

Dud made no answer, which was perhaps just as well since had he replied truthfully to the coach's question he would have been forced to say that he was quite certain that he couldn't do anything of the sort! Instead, he walked toward the mound with a fair appearance of ease and in a condition of blue funk. Murtha met him, and although the latter smiled cheerfully and tried his best to look as if he thought all his troubles were now past, it wasn't difficult for Dud to perceive that the captain was a bit disappointed in Mr. Sargent's selection. He would have much preferred Nate Leddy, but he

had a good deal of confidence in the coach's judgment and, after all, young Baker had shown real pitching more than once.

"Good boy, Baker," he said cheerfully. "Let's see what you can do now. Listen, let Gordon do the head-work, see? Just try to give him what he wants. They've got three on and no one out, Baker, and the score's two against you. Whatever you do, old man, don't pass him. Let him hit if you have to and try to make him pop up. Do your best, Baker, for we want this game!"

Guy handed him the ball and Dud, very trembly at the knees, conscious of the hot glare of sunlight that made heat waves dance along the paths, conscious of the encouraging voices of teammates and of hearty applause from the stand, wrapped his fingers about the leather and sent in his first "warming-up" ball. A whoop of joy and derision came from the visitors' bench, for the ball had almost eluded the spry Gordon. Back it came and Dud, trying his best to calm his nerves, shot it in again. It was all right that time and the next. Then the ball struck the ground in front of the plate and Gordon had to drop and block it. One more, high and wide, ended the practice and the Lawrence third-baseman stepped up to the plate again as the umpire called "Play!" From the Lawrence bench and from the Lawrence coachers came a sudden hubbub of sound,

but through it Dud heard Nick Blake's cheerful voice.

"We're all with you, Dud! Go to it, son!"

"Dud!" Nick had never called him that before, and somehow the thought steadied him remarkably. To be sure, his knees were still a trifle wobbly as he studied Gordon's fingers laid against the back of his mitt, but the stage-fright was passing.

"Let's get him, Baker," called Gordon as he arose from his crouch and held hands wide apart. "You've got the stuff, old man!"

With a man on third watching for the least excuse to race home, a full wind-up was out of the question, and Dud realized that he must depend more on cunning than speed. Gordon had shown three fingers horizontal, and three fingers horizontal called for a low curve ball. Dud, emulating the example of Myatt, surveyed the bases slowly, pulled his cap down, tried to shut out the wild cries of the coachers, snuggled the ball in his fingers, threw his arm up, took his stride and pitched.

At the plate the batter moved up on the ball, hesitated and let it pass.

"Strike!" said the umpire.

There was cheering from the stand, yells of triumph from the players in the field, but Dud scarcely heard them. Gordon, walking down the alley, thumped ball and mitt together. "That's the stuff,

Baker!" he cried. "One-and-two now! Let's have him out!" He tossed the ball back, a watchful eye on third, went back to his place, crouched, signaled and again held hands wide apart. He wanted a drop and he got it, but it shaved too closely the outer corner and the umpire judged it a ball. Gordon turned indignantly.

"What!"

"You heard what I said," returned the official crisply.

Gordon grinned and returned the ball. "It looked good, Baker! Let's have it again!"

But it was "one finger" this time, and the fast one that sailed straight across the plate caught the batsman napping, and the umpire's *"Strike—two!"* was drowned in a shout of joy from the Grafton sympathizers.

"That's the pitching, Dud!" called Nick, scooping a handful of dust from the base path and tossing it joyfully into the air. "Fine work, Baker!" "Keep after him!" "No one walks!" They were all calling encouragement to him now. He almost forgot the shouting, cavorting runners and the bawling coachers. Back came the ball once more, Gordon grinning widely. Then he dropped to one knee and laid four fingers across the big brown mitt.

"Right in the slot, old man! He can't see 'em! At a boy! Let her come!"

And Dud let her! It was a slow one that did the trick, a ball that sped away from the mound with all the ear-marks of a moderately fast straight delivery but that never crossed the rubber until the batsman's sharp swing had passed harmlessly. Then it descended into Gordon's eager hands and the umpire waved an arm skyward.

"He's out!"

How the stand shouted then and how silent the Lawrence bench suddenly became! The third-baseman, disgusted and puzzled, dragged his dishonored bat away with him and tossed it contemptuously into the pile. But that was only one down, and a big, capable-looking youth with a grim determination shown in his tight-set mouth was already waiting. A wide one that went as a ball, a drop that the batter tried for and missed, a second ball—Dud had attempted to cut the inner corner of the plate with a hook and had failed by an inch—and then, in response to Gordon's signal of one finger, a fast one that reached the batsman waist-high and which he met with his bat.

Crack!

He was speeding to first, the bases were emptying. Dud, heart in mouth, turned in time to see Nick Blake spring two feet into the air and spear the ball, and then, without a wasted motion, dash across the second sack a scant instant before the runner

from first slid, feet foremost, into it in a cloud of dust!

Nick had played the double unassisted and the side was out! Grafton stood up in the stand and shouted herself hoarse. Dud, still a little dazed by the suddenness of the triumph, stood a moment beside the pitcher's box ere he turned toward the bench. Then Guy Murtha was with him, had him by the arm and was laughing softly and saying extravagant things that he probably wouldn't have said five minutes later. But Dud didn't altogether sense them. He only knew during the ensuing minute that Nick had saved him—and the game! And if he could have done what he wanted to do he'd have embraced that youth on the spot. As it was, ignorant that some of the applause was really meant for him, he made his way to the bench and sat down a bit breathlessly, and someone was waving a dampened towel in front of him and there was much talk and laughter.

And so Grafton started her half of the seventh with the score still 1 to 0 and Ayer at bat. Ayer popped innumerable fouls into all sorts of out of the way places and then, with two strikes and one ball against him, stood inertly by and let a perfectly good straight one pass. He shook his head dejectedly as he turned away. Boynton reached first on second-baseman's questionable error—the Lawrence

scorer gave Boynton a hit—and went to second a moment later when Jimmy was thrown out at first. Gordon brought the inning to an end by fouling out to third-baseman.

Then Dud was back in the box again and Gordon was shouting one thing and signaling another and again the Lawrence coachers were doing their level best to rattle him. But that first of the eighth was easy work for Dud. The luck was all Grafton's. The first of the enemy beat out a bunt and then was caught by Gordon going to second. Dud scored his second strike-out on the next man, using just four deliveries. The succeeding batter proved more troublesome, for after Dud had worked two strikes across he began to lay against the others and foul them off with a fine impartiality. Everything, it seemed, was fish that went to his net, and Dud was beginning to despair of ever getting rid of him. He slipped up once and sailed one over the stubborn batsman's head, and added a second ball to the score. Then, however, Gordon signaled a low curve and this time the ever-ready bat missed! So did Gordon, for that matter, but he found the rolling sphere and got it to Ayer well ahead of the runner. Dud got a round of applause all to himself this time, as he went back to the bench to pick out his bat, but he was so busy wondering just how much of a fool he would look when he stood up there and tried to

hit the redoubtable Fairway that he didn't even hear it.

I'd like to tell you, in view of what occurred later, that Dud picked out one of Fairway's slants and drove it across River Street for a home-run. But nothing of that sort happened, and if Dud didn't look like a fool at the bat on that occasion it was only because pitchers aren't supposed to be hitters. Dud was an easy proposition for the rival twirler. He promptly forgot everything he had ever learned about batting and swung wildly at the first two offers, held himself away from temptation at the third one and fanned the air an inch above the succeeding ball. He returned to the bench shame-facedly, but no one paid any attention to his fiasco and it dawned on him that he had done just what they had expected him to do and a great big determination arose in him to do better the next time, to learn how to judge a ball rightly and to eventually become that rara avis of baseballdom, a pitcher who can hit! But there was, it proved, no second chance for him today. Nick Blake fanned as effectively if not as promptly as Dud had and Bert Winslow was thrown out at first. And the ninth inning began.

Once more Dud proved his mastery of the enemy, but there were no strike-outs for him this time. The first Lawrence batsman hit to Winslow and went out at first, the next man flied out to Ordway and the

third, after Dud had put two strikes across, lighted on a low curve and popped it unexpectedly into short right for a base. Dud made three attempts to catch him napping and failed and the next minute the runner was sliding to second ahead of Gordon's hurried throw. But Lawrence got no further, for the following batsman, trying hard to hit safely out of the infield, merely succeeded in smashing a liner into Ayer's hands.

Once more Grafton swung her bats and tried to break the deadlock. The heat was moderating now and long shadows were creeping across the diamond, but the players of both sides were fagged and wilted and prayed for the end of the contest. But it wasn't to come yet, for Ordway fanned, Murtha flied out to left field—it would have been a wonderful hit if that fielder hadn't raced back like a rabbit and made a one-hand catch that brought applause even from the Grafton adherents—Ayer beat out a bunt and Boynton hit a weak grounder to shortstop and the ninth had passed into history.

Dud was back at his post again, a little tired, too, in spite of the fact that he had worked only two innings. He had the head of the list against him now and realized that this was no time for slip-ups. Lawrence began enthusiastically. The little, blond-headed second-baseman outwitted Gordon and Dud and walked to first. The next batsman fouled out

to Ayer. Then came a sharp *rap* and the ball sailed over second base and there were two on and only one out. But things looked better a few minutes later, for Dud scored his third strike-out, turning the left-fielder ignominiously back to the bench. That surely ought to have ended things for all practical purposes, but right there Luck took a hand in the game. The next batsman was anxious to hit, and Gordon knew it. In consequence the latter signaled high ones and Dud tried to serve them up. They caught him on the second for a strike, after the first had gone as a ball, and then Dud fooled him with a low one that barely crossed and the score was two-and-one. It seemed all over but the shouting and Gordon risked all on the next delivery. One finger was the signal and Dud sped the fast one in breast-high with not a thing on it but steam. The batsman leaned against that nice ball and drove it far and high into right field and although Boynton was under it he missed the catch. And although he recovered it quickly and sped it back to second, and Guy Murtha pegged it on to third, the runner there was safe and the chap who had hit took advantage of the play and slid to second unchallenged.

Lawrence caught hopefully at the chance before her. A pinch hitter took the place of the center fielder. Gordon had no line on the new man and

had to guess his tastes. A high one was refused and was judged a ball, a curve that just didn't cut the outer corner went as another ball. Gordon signaled for a drop and the batter bit at it and had one strike against him. Then another drop failed to please the umpire and Dud was in the hole. Gordon called for a high one over the plate and Dud tried to put it there. But he didn't. The ball went wide and Dud saw with dismay the batsman trotting to first and heard the triumphant yelps of the enemy. Another pinch hitter was up and Gordon, a little anxious of countenance now, was asking for a curve ball. Dud responded and scored a strike, the batter hitting hard but uselessly. Then came a ball, then a second. Gordon was calling all sorts of encouragement. Guy Murtha came over and told Dud to take his time. His teammates were assuring him that he could do it. The enemy's coachers, back of first and third, were howling and dancing like Comanche Indians. The runners were running back and forth along the paths. Pandemonium was fairly loose and the din thumped against Dud's ears excruciatingly. He felt his courage ebbing out of his finger-tips. He wanted to ask Murtha to let him quit, to put someone else in, but was more afraid to do that than he was to go on. Gordon was pleading for a straight one. Dud glued his eyes to the catcher's chest, took his half wind-up and sped the ball.

And even as he released it he knew that he had failed again!

"Ball– -three!" called the umpire through the din.

Gordon was hurrying down the alley toward him, shaking the ball at him, his eyes blazing.

"Settle down!" he growled. "Put 'em over! You can do it! Now get on to yourself!"

Dud took the ball, nodded dazedly and turned back to the mound. Murtha was there, Murtha and Winslow, too, and the captain was looking over past third base and juggling a pebble in his dirt-grimed hands. When he turned his gaze sought Dud grimly.

"Guess you'd better let someone else in, Baker," he said. "Sorry, but we need this, old man."

Dud passed him the ball, tried to say something, he didn't know what, and turned, white-faced and with hanging head, toward the bench.

CHAPTER XX

JIMMY ENCOURAGES

THAT game with Lawrence Textile went to thirteen innings and ended, still a tie, 1 to 1, to allow the visitors to get their train. Nate Leddy, going to the rescue with three on, two out and the pitcher's score one-and-three, pulled out of the hole very neatly. Instead of attempting the difficult feat of striking the batsman out, Nate dropped one over knee-high and the ball went straight up from the swinging bat and straight down again into Gordon's mitten, and Lawrence saw her golden opportunity vanish. After that for three innings, although the suspense kept up every moment, neither side got anywhere near a score. Leddy and Fairway, the latter showing fatigue and substituting control for speed, were masters every minute. Fairway's work to the very end was such that the spectators applauded him every time he left the mound or went to bat. After that hair-raising, nerve-racking tenth inning, Grafton could feel only satisfaction at the outcome. Even Captain Murtha had no regrets, and if

Coach Sargent was disappointed he made no sign.

Perhaps, aside from the Lawrence players, the only disconsolate one was Dud. He had hurried from his shower straight to his room, his main desire being to get out of the way before the game ended and the fellows came piling into the Field House, and so he didn't learn the outcome of the contest until Jimmy arrived, half an hour later. By that time Dud's common sense had come to the rescue and he was able to review his performance in the pitcher's box without being prompted to suicide. After all, he had fared no worse than Gus Weston, he told himself comfortingly, and even Ben Myatt had begun distributing passes before he had been taken out; although, of course, Ben had far more excuse for giving out, since he had pitched six innings.

Dud was still wondering what had happened to him. He had been all right until Boynton had made that memorable muff. After that he hadn't been able to get the ball where he wanted it. It wasn't that his arm had tired. It had been just as good as when he had started. And, as Dud recalled it now, he hadn't been nervous; not, anyway, until he had issued that first pass in the tenth. It just seemed, looking back on the fiasco, that the ball had suddenly simply refused to go where it was sent! He wondered whether Mr. Sargent would ever give him

another chance, whether the fellows were secretly laughing at him. Well, he had surely afforded Bert Winslow a fine opportunity to say "I told you so!" Bert had all along been politely contemptuous of Dud's ambition to make the first team, although of late he had been very decent to him indeed. He rather hoped he wouldn't run across Bert for a day or two!

Dud didn't make the mistake of feeling himself disgraced, at least not after the first few miserable minutes, but he did feel that he had failed pretty badly as a pitcher, and that before the whole school, and he dreaded having to face the fellows again. He was pondering the idea of remaining away from dining-hall that evening when Jimmy came tramping along the corridor and entered.

"Hello, you! Where'd you get to?" Jimmy skimmed his cap to the bed and threw himself tiredly into a chair. "Did you see the game out?"

Dud shook his head. "What—what was the score?" he asked dejectedly.

"Just the same as when you ducked; one each." Jimmy gave a brief but graphic history of the final three innings. "Why didn't you come back and see the rest of it?" he concluded.

"I guess I would have if I'd known they weren't beating us. I'm glad they didn't. Did—did anyone say anything?"

"Say anything? What about?"

"About me, I mean."

"Oh, that's what's worrying you? I thought you looked a little bit down-hearted. Don't you let that bother you, son. They all have to go through with that before they arrive. You did pretty well, on the whole. Three strike-outs, wasn't it? And then you pulled us out of that hole in the seventh! Don't be a clam, Dud. No one expects a green pitcher to go into a game like that and twirl like a veteran. Why, the row those fellows kicked up even made *me* nervous, away out in the field!"

"It wasn't that," said Dud sadly. "I don't know what it was. Of course, I was rattled just at first, but afterwards I didn't pay any attention to the noise. I guess Mr. Sargent thinks I'm a pill!"

"Rot! I'll bet you lasted longer than Pete expected you to. Of course, I'm not saying that it wouldn't have been a bully thing for you if you'd gone the distance; you'd have had the whole school inviting you to dinner; but you did pretty well as it was. And, say, talking about that—being popular, I mean, and making a hit—that little meeting with Hobo and Blake was a lucky thing for us, wasn't it? Look at the way they've taken you up, Dud! Fine, what?"

"I suppose so," agreed the other rather listlessly. "They've been awfully nice to me——"

"You bet! And a lot of their crowd, too. Why, say——"

"But I don't, somehow, care so much about being —being a 'regular feller' as I did, Jimmy. I—I'd rather be a good pitcher."

"Isn't that human nature?" demanded Jimmy, apparently of the ceiling. "Just as soon as a fellow gets what he wants, he doesn't want it! You make me tired, Dud! Here I've schemed and labored for you——"

"I know, and I'm awfully much obliged," said Dud soberly. "Only—please don't do it any more, Jimmy. I've had enough of it, I guess."

"My dear demented friend, you've just started! You mustn't think that just because Hobo Ordway and Nick Blake and Bert Winslow and a few of that close corporation have taken you up that the battle's won. Far be it from such! The fun's only started, son. You've got two years here yet and you want to make hay while the sun shines. Just you leave it to me——"

"No, you leave it to me now," said Dud. "I guess it's like Blake said; every fellow must hoe his own row. And—and I haven't got time to—to be popular, Jimmy. I just want to get so I can pitch like Ben Myatt."

"Say, that's hitching your wagon to a star, all right; Ben being the 'star'! Maybe you're right,

though. There's always the danger of having fellows think you're trying too hard; and they don't like that. Maybe your scheme is the best, Dud. Foxy, too, I call it."

"I haven't any scheme," denied the other impatiently. "I just want to quit thinking anything about whether fellows like me or don't like me. I guess if they do it will be because—because I don't care!"

"That's what I'm saying," said Jimmy, grinning exasperatingly. "Just let them think you don't care a fig and they'll flock to you. Yep, that's a good idea, Dud."

"Jimmy, if folks didn't know you better they'd think sometimes that you were a regular—regular——"

"Feller?" asked Jimmy helpfully.

"Bounder!"

"Oh! Thank you kindly. And such is gratitude! Never mind, son, all you need is food. Let's get to it."

"I don't think—that is, I'm not very hungry——"

"Not hungry! You're not sick, are you?" Dud shook his head. "Then what's wrong with you?"

"Well, if you must know," replied the other desperately, "I—I don't want to go over there and see the fellows grinning at me."

"Grinning at you? What would they be do-

ing—— Say, for the love of lemons, Dud, get that idea out of your bean! Why, no one's grinning at you, you three-ply chump! Why should they? Didn't you go in there and save our bacon for us? Didn't you work three innings like a regular 'Matty'? Sure, you did! Then what——"

"And I went to pieces, too, and filled the bases that time," said Dud bitterly. "Even if they don't grin I shall know they want to!"

"Piffle! Honest, Dud, I didn't know you were such a chump. Look here, you've been wondering again! Don't tell me! I can see it. You've got your 'I-wonder' expression on! You stop thinking about Dud Baker and wash your dirty face and hands and come to eats. I'll guarantee that you won't get grinned at once, old man. If I see any fellow trying it I'll punch his head!"

After all, Dud only wanted to be reassured and had no real intention of missing his supper, for he was undeniably hungry. And so, presently, they were off to dining-hall together, and things were just as Jimmy had predicted. There were no grins, save an occasional friendly one, and no one paid much more attention to Dud than usual. They slipped into their places at table—neither had been called to the training table yet, since accommodations at that board were very limited—and Jimmy, in high spirits, bandied remarks with the others be-

tween mouthfuls, and Dud tried hard to forget anything that had happened since luncheon.

There was, naturally, much talk of the game and much criticism of various plays, as there always was, and Jimmy, as a participant, was listened to with respect if not with entire credence. At the training table, across the hall, there were no signs of depression, if one could judge by the talk and laughter. In fact, the whole school was looking back on the afternoon's contest as something very much like a lucky victory. And perhaps it was. At all events, a comparison of the scores showed that Lawrence had made more hits and fewer errors and that the renowned Mr. Fairway had behaved more creditably than the four Grafton pitchers judged together.

When Dud and Jimmy left the dining-hall they ran into Nick Blake and Bert Winslow in the corridor. Dud had determined to avoid any such meeting, but fortune ruled otherwise.

"Hello, James T.," greeted Nick. "How's Tris Speaker Junior tonight? Hello, Dud Baker."

"My arms are a trifle lame," responded Jimmy. "When a fellow makes all the hits in a game——"

"Hah!" ejaculated Nick mirthlessly. "Again, hah! You make me laugh, Jimmy. He's a regular funny fellow, isn't he, Dud? How are you feeling, by the way? Say, that was some twirling you did in the seventh, my lad!"

"How about the tenth?" asked Dud, smiling wanly.

"Well, no harm done, you know," said Nick cheerfully. "They all get theirs sooner or later, and I dare say if you'd stayed in you'd have pulled yourself out all right."

"If we hadn't needed the game so much," observed Bert, "he'd have stayed in, I guess. I was hoping Guy would let him. It's a bully good thing for a pitcher to have to dig his way out, Baker. Gives him confidence, you know. If I was captain of a team and a pitcher got in a hole I'd just let him stay right there and crawl out of it. Just let him have to do it, and if he's the least bit of good, he will. My notion is that if a pitcher thinks he's going to be relieved any time he goes bad, he's going bad too plaguey often! That sound like sense to you, Jimmy?"

"I haven't heard a word that sounded like sense since I got here," answered Jimmy gravely. "If someone would suggest something to do more exciting than hearing Lit and Forum jabber over some subject like: 'Resolved: That Marcus T. Cicero was faster on the bases than his brother Quint,' or 'That the Penguin is mightier than the Swordfish'!"

"That's so, it's debate night, isn't it?" said Nick. "Who's going? You, Bert?"

"I suppose so. You?"

"Well, if there was anything better——!"

"There's a moon," said Jimmy tentatively.

"Go on, pray! Your words interest me strangely," prompted Nick, assuming an attitude of suspense.

"And there's a river——"

"I get you! Will you go, Bert?"

"Bathing? I guess so. Let's find Hugh. You'll come, Baker?"

"Thanks, but I've got——" Dud stopped abruptly. Jimmy, smiling sweetly, had surreptitiously kicked him on the shin.

"Yes, he'll come," said Jimmy. "As this happens to be a Saturday night, Dud, your excuse of having to dig Latin or something is very poor. Let's find a crowd, fellows."

"Let's not," said Bert. "I'll round up Hobo and Ted Trafford. They went off a minute ago. That's enough. By the way, though, I suppose you fellows know that the rules forbid it?"

"No, honest?" Jimmy was evidently as pained as he was surprised. "Did you know that, Nick?"

"News to me, Jimmy! I was never so surprised in my life! Are you sure of what you tell us, Bert?"

"Oh, go to the dickens! Come on then before the moon goes down."

"Or the river evaporates," added Jimmy. "I'm going to suggest, fellows, that we avoid publicity

as much as possible. The last time I had anything to do with that old river it nearly got me into trouble!"

I feel that I ought to record here that Dud's conscience made itself heard, and that, refusing to transgress the rules of the school, he persuaded the others to forego the enterprise. I'd like to record that, but I can't, for Dud's conscience must have been asleep, and ten minutes or so later he was following the others—and Pop Driver, who had been discovered in the company of Hugh and Ted Trafford and persuaded to join the party—across the Green and Lothrop Field to the Beach, as the scanty expanse of sandy shore bordering the Cove was somewhat ironically called. And I am forced to relate that the moonlight bathing party was a huge success, that it lasted until nearly ten o'clock and that faculty remained forever in ignorance of it. So, it would seem, for once the transgressor went unpunished. But perhaps not, after all, for Nick cut his foot open on a mussel shell or a piece of glass and Ted Trafford caught an awful cold that lasted him nearly until school closed! Possibly the reason that the others escaped retribution was just because their crime was not, after all, especially wicked.

CHAPTER XXI

ON THE MOUND

DUD wondered—Jimmy wasn't there to stop him!—what Mr. Sargent would say to him on Monday regarding that performance of his in the Lawrence Textile game. As a matter of fact, Mr. Sargent said absolutely nothing, either then or at any other time. There was very light practice that afternoon, most of it batting, and the fellows were dismissed early, many of them returning after changing to the practice diamond to watch the second team put away the Grafton High School nine. It wasn't a vastly exciting affair, however, for the second, with Joe Kelly pitching, had things about its own way. Dud and Jimmy departed at the end of the seventh inning, leaving the home team five runs to the good, and spent a half-hour on the river in Nick Blake's canoe. (Jimmy asked permission when they returned, and so that was all right!) Jimmy was troubled today and made Dud his confidant as they paddled slowly along under the drooping boughs. His trouble concerned Starling Meyer. But we'll let Jimmy tell it in his own inimitable way.

"Someone," said Jimmy morosely, "has told Star he could play baseball. Huh! That's all right, too, but what's the use of making me let go the second and then dumping me in just when the fun begins? How do I know I'll be dumped? Well, I don't, I suppose. But, listen, if that chap keeps on butting in where'll I be? Ordway and Boynton and Parker are sure of the outfield places unless they break a leg or a neck or something. Well, sure, that's O. K.; they're better than I am. I know that. The only chance I get is when one of 'em is out of the game. One of 'em's likely to be out now and then and so I get a whack. All right, say we. But here comes this—this Indian, Meyer, butting in and snooping around for the crumbs, too. That makes two of us; three, if you count Ben Myatt; and Pete's likely to put Ben in center or right any chance he gets because Ben can bat like a whale! If Star Meyer'd mind his own business, which is playing hockey and running creation, I'd have a fair chance to get into one of the Mount Morris games, wouldn't I? Sure, I would! Parker isn't very spry on that game leg of his, and I've noticed that Boynton is looking sort of like a friend of mine looked before he went into a decline. And Hobo might fall out of his canoe any day and get drowned—if he'd only use it more. I must suggest it to him. He doesn't get enough exercise. Why the dickens can't Star

keep out of it? That's what I want to know. Something told me away last winter that I'd have trouble with that galoot before the year was over!"

"I thought I was the one," said Dud slyly.

Jimmy grunted. "So did I. Well, anyway, one good thing is that faculty hasn't forbidden *me* to take a fall out of him!"

"But you can't very well thrash a fellow for just playing ball, Jimmy!"

"I can beat him up for interfering with my affairs," responded the other with dignity. "Bet you anything you like he will work around Guy Murtha and Guy'll take him along to Corliss day after tomorrow."

"I suppose Parker will be back by then," suggested Dud.

"Parker? Oh, I dare say. But, listen, Dud, between you and me now, I don't believe Parker stands awfully high with Pete. I wouldn't be surprised if he didn't get back again; regularly, I mean. And if he doesn't, why, maybe little Jimmy T. Logan will have a chance, eh? That is, if Meyer doesn't persuade Guy that he's a ball-player beforehand."

"You're hitting better than Star, aren't you?"

"N-no, I don't think so. Wish I were! Still, I get my base a heap oftener. I suppose shooting at hockey helps Star hit the ball. Say, do you know, Dud darling, I'm going to be sort of peeved and

disappointed if I don't get into one of those Mount Morris games? I wasn't awfully keen at first, as you know, but now that I've started I'd like to make good. Besides," he added gloomily, "the family'll be here for that second game and I'd feel like an awful chump if I had to swing my legs on the bench all the afternoon!"

"You'd be in good company," said Dud.

"Meaning you?" asked the other, as he turned the canoe back toward home. "Oh, you'll get your chance, Dud. Mount Morris has got some hitters, they say, and if she has neither Myatt nor Nate Leddy will last the games through. As for Brunswick, I guess he's a goner for this year."

"There's Weston, though."

"That's so, too. I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see Gus turn around and pitch a corking game some day soon. I guess the trouble with Gus is that he's too temperamental. He and I are alike that way. If the weather isn't just right or the moon's in the wrong quarter or the tide's too high or his shoe pinches him, Gus can't pitch a little bit. But some day all the signs are going to be just right, and Gus will slip on a pair of old shoes, and he will go out there and make 'em eat out of his hand." Jimmy paused. Then: "Maybe," he added cautiously, "you can't tell about Gus. Like me, he has the artistic temperament."

"Well," said Dud, after a long silence and as they swung the canoe into the Cove, "I hope you get into all the Mount Morris games, Jimmy, and do finely. And I hope," he added wistfully, "that they let me pitch an inning or two in one of them. I—I'd like that."

"And I," responded Jimmy, "hope as how you gets your hope! Easy on! Let her run, sonny!"

It looked the next day as though Jimmy might be right about Gordon Parker, for although that youth was back for practice with his leg evidently as useful as ever, he did not get back into the outfield when the first and second lined up for the practice game. Instead, Boynton played in right, Jimmy in center and Ordway in left until the fifth inning, when Star Meyer took Jimmy's place, much to that youth's disgust. Leddy and Weston pitched that afternoon. Ben Myatt had been more affected by the heat on Saturday than he or anyone else had suspected at the time, and was said to be nursing himself for the next day's game with Corliss College. Save for pitching to the batters in practice, neither Dud nor Brunswick did any work that afternoon. Dud watched the game from the bench and listened, during the last two innings, to Jimmy's frank expressions of hurt feelings. Every time a fly ball went into center field Jimmy watched it hopefully.

"Hope he muffs it! Hope he mu—— Isn't that rotten luck? Anyway, that's a bum throw-in! If I couldn't do better than that—sometimes—I wouldn't try to get an honest man's job away from him. Say, you're next, Churchill. Knock a long one into center, will you? Put it about fifty feet over Meyer's head, like a good fellow!"

But in spite of Jimmy's hopes and criticisms Star played a good enough game in center and managed to get a rather lucky hit the only time he went to bat. Jimmy tried to bribe Manager Barnes to score it as an error for the second team shortstop, but failed.

There was an early and rather hurried dinner for the players the next day and the team, eighteen strong, bowled away to the station shortly after one o'clock. Much to his surprise, Dud made one of four pitchers to accompany it, and Jimmy, too, was of the number. Jimmy's satisfaction, however, was somewhat spoiled by the presence of Star Meyer. Parker was left behind. So, too, was Ben Myatt, still suffering from what the school physician had diagnosed as "a touch of heat." Ben was instructed to keep out of the hot sunlight and, when playing, wear a fold of paper inside his cap. Mr. Sargent, however, had no intention of allowing Ben to pitch again until he was so far recovered as not to require that paper. The first of the series with Mount Morris would be played on Saturday, just three days

later, and so Ben had been instructed to stay right at home and be very, very good to himself. Leddy, Weston, Brunswick and Dud would undoubtedly manage between them to dispose of Corliss, for Corliss, although called a college, was little more than a preparatory school and was not considered dangerous.

Corliss lay an hour and forty minutes away by railroad, although the actual distance was about thirty-eight miles. The team had to change at Needham Junction first and, later on, at North Taunton, and in consequence was somewhat weary when it finally disembarked from the trolley car that had brought it from the Corliss Station to the nearest point to the school. They paraded up a tree-shaded street, past some yellow-brick building that looked uncomfortably hot and glary today, and eventually reached the field, a very ambitious affair, inclosed with a brick wall and containing a permanent stand of concrete and a picturesque building of the same material roofed with red tiles. The fellows secretly admired that field, but they pretended to consider it too dressy and made a good deal of fun of the commodious and well-appointed building into which they were shown. There they had a room all to themselves and three shower baths as well. By the time they had changed to playing togs the stand was well sprinkled with spectators and a welcoming

cheer greeted them as they took the field for practice. Only some dozen and a half Graftonians had accompanied the nine, for examinations held many at school and others were too poor to pay for the trip. But the handful of patriotic youths gathered themselves into a small but devoted group in a corner of the big stand and from the first appearance of the Scarlet-and-Gray on the diamond to the end of the contest made enough noise for thrice their number.

All four pitchers were set to warm up while the fielders practiced. Will Brunswick, by this time reconciled to his fate, went through the motions in a mechanical fashion, but the other three set to work hard, each hoping to get the call. After the Corliss players, a rather hefty lot of blue-stockinged and blue-sleeved youths, had taken the field and completed their warming up, Mr. Sargent had a consultation with Guy Murtha and Pete Gordon. Dud pretended no interest as he sat on the bench between Hugh Ordway and Neil Ayer, but secretly he was a very anxious boy. Manager Barnes was getting the batting order now from the coach and Dud, while answering a remark of Hugh's, strained his ears to hear.

"Blake, Winslow, Ordway, Murtha, Ayer, Boynton, Meyer"—Dud felt sorry for Jimmy then—"Gordon and—I'll give you the pitcher later." Mr.

Sargent nodded to Nick Blake. "Start it up," he said.

Nick went to bat while Mr. Sargent arose and, after watching the work of the opposing pitcher, a broad-shouldered and rather slow-moving fellow named Walters, for a few moments, moved along and spoke to Nate Leddy. Dud's gaze followed, although he tried not to let it. The coach and Leddy spoke for several moments, their eyes all the while on the Corliss twirler. At last Mr. Sargent nodded and Leddy settled back in his seat, turning to his companion on the left, Boynton, and making a remark that brought, as Dud saw, a look of surprise to the face of the right fielder. Mr. Sargent remained behind the bench, watching Nick Blake trying to find something useful to him amongst the slow, wide curves that the blue-legged pitcher was offering. Nick finally slammed one across the diamond, but was an easy out, shortstop to first.

Bert Winslow raised a long fly to left field and likewise retired and Hugh Ordway, after fouling off a couple, was badly fooled on a drop and fanned. As the players arose from the bench to trot into the field Dud, who had forgotten the coach for the moment, felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Baker, I'm going to let you start," said Mr. Sargent. "You've pitched to Brooks a good deal,

haven't you? Would you rather have him handle you than Gordon?"

"He knows my stuff pretty well, sir," stammered Dud. "But it's just as you say, sir."

The coach called to Ed Brooks. "You catch Baker, Brooks," he said. "Let's see what you can do, my boy. Study your batters and watch the bases. Barnes, put Brooks down for Gordon and Baker last. All right now, you two. Show what you can do."

Dud started for the mound, drawing on his glove, but Brooks overtook him on the way. "Say, Dud, don't let's slip up on signals, eh?" he said anxiously. "If you don't get 'em sing out. And if you use that side-arm pitch signal beforehand, will you? I'm always afraid of that getting by me. Lift your cap in front and I'll know, see? All right, Dud!"

CHAPTER XXII

DUD COMES BACK

DUD started out with one idea, which was to redeem himself. He was pretty sure that Mr. Sargent would not expect him to go more than five innings, six at the very most, and he determined to use every bit of strength and science he possessed during those six frames, to pitch himself out if necessary, but at all hazards to show form. He was nervous at first and showed wildness with his practice balls, and after that made a bad start by passing the first man up for Corliss. But subsequently he settled down nicely, and although he had no strike-outs to his credit in that first inning, he allowed no hits, and the runner on first never left that bag.

Grafton got two hits in the second, one rather scratchy, but failed to score. Corliss once more got a man to first on a hit that took a bad bound in front of Nick Blake and once more watched him die there. In the third, after Grafton had retired in one, two three order, Dud began to find his control, and he and Ed Brooks disposed of the Corliss pitcher and the

first two batsmen on the Blue's list with no trouble, Walters fanning, the next man popping a fly to Neil Ayer and the next being thrown out at first by Bert Winslow.

Grafton got her first run in the fourth inning. Hugh Ordway was passed, Murtha sacrificed him to second and, after Neil Ayer had struck out, Boynton slipped a fast grounder down the alley between shortstop and second, and Hugh romped home and beat the throw by a yard. Star Meyer flied out to center field.

Dud added speed to science in the last of the fourth and two of the Blue's best batsmen fanned wildly, and the little group of Graftonians in the corner of the stand cheered themselves patriotically and appropriately scarlet of face. The succeeding batter drove a liner into Captain Murtha's glove and the fifth inning began.

Ed Brooks allowed Walters to put him in a hole with the first two deliveries, and then, after disdaining a couple of wide ones, swung despairingly at a third and somehow managed to get it on the tip end of his bat and land it safely behind shortstop. Then began a fusillade of the Corliss pitcher that ultimately spelled retirement for that youth. Dud, who had rolled a weak one down the first-base path and been an easy out the first time at bat, now tried twice to bunt and failed. After that there was nothing to do

but take a good healthy swing and try to get the ball out of the infield. With the score two-and-two, Dud cut loose and poked a hit past third-baseman that put Brooks on the third sack and himself on first. Blake bunted and the pitcher fielded, the latter making the mistake of holding the ball too long to protect the plate. When he finally tossed to first he was too late and the bases were full.

At this interesting juncture Bert Winslow ought to have stepped into the limelight with a smashing home-run or a three-bagger at least, but the best Bert could do was to bounce one away to shortstop and Brooks was an easy out at the plate. But the bases were still filled, with only one man down, and there were cries of "Lift it, Hobo!" "Knock it in the nose, Hobo!" as Hugh went to the plate. Walters, showing the strain now, pitched two wild heaves which his catcher barely stopped and then slipped one across in the groove. Hugh swung at it but was too late. A third ball followed and Grafton yelled exultantly. But again Walters made good, Hugh not offering. Everything depended on the next delivery, and as the ball left the pitcher's hand the three runners on the paths started away. They need not have hurried, though, for the ball went low and wide and Hugh walked, Dud crossing the platter with the second tally for the Scarlet-and-Gray.

By this time Corliss had two pitchers warming up

and it was easy to see that Walters' minutes were numbered. Captain Murtha brought affairs to the crisis by landing on the pitcher's second delivery and lifting it high and far to right field. It was well over the fielder's head, and that youth failed to get under it. Two more runs tallied and Guy took second. After that Walters passed Ayer and was promptly derricked. The new twirler, Hoyt, had difficulty in getting under way, and before he succeeded two more hits and as many runs had been scored. Of the hits Boynton contributed one and Brooks one. Star Meyer made the second out and Dud the third, Dud being robbed of a hit by a pretty running catch of a short fly to center.

The score was 6 to 0 when the last half of the fifth started and there seemed to be no doubt as to who owned the game. Dud was beginning to feel tired, but believed himself fit for another inning, or two if necessary. But things broke bad at the start. The first of the enemy to face him showed no eagerness to hit and before he knew it Dud was two balls to the bad. Then, although he managed to get a strike across, he followed with a third ball, and the final result was that the Corliss youth smashed a hot liner straight over third base and took two bases on the hit. The succeeding batsman fouled out quickly to Winslow. Then Brooks tried to catch the runner off second and the ball got away from Murtha,

who took the throw, and the runner reached third.

Dud felt himself slipping then and shot an inquiring look toward the bench. But Mr. Sargent was evidently still unworried, for Leddy and Weston were both there and no one was warming up. Dud gritted his teeth and went on. The batsman had a strike and two balls on him when Dud, trying to break a high one over the inner corner, lost control of the ball and it went straight for the batter's head. But Dud's shout of *"Look out!"* was not necessary. The man at the plate dropped just in time and the ball sailed past Brooks and brought up at the net, the runner on third sprinting home.

Murtha and the others did their best to steady Dud again, and Ed Brooks, walking down to place the ball in Dud's hand, said: "That was my fault, Dud. I ought to have got it. Sorry, old man. Don't mind it, though. Let's have this fellow, eh?"

Dud nodded. It was nice of Brooks to call it his fault, but of course it hadn't been anything of the sort. Dud glanced again toward the bench as he went back to his place on the mound. He wished that Mr. Sargent would get his relief ready. He wondered why he didn't. He was giving way to a sort of fright now, although he didn't show it unless by the longer time he took to grip the ball and study Brooks' signal. About him the infield players were speaking words of encouragement. The bats-

man had him in the hole. He must make him hit. But something told him that he was worked out, that there was no use trying, that today was to be just a repetition of that other day when he had gone to pieces there on Lothrop Field with the whole school looking on!

Brooks had signaled for a straight ball and Dud tried to pitch it. Instead of being straight, though, it was a hook, but it crossed the corner of the plate and the umpire was charitable to Dud. Brooks, looking anxious, threw it back slowly and again spread his hands. The little group of Grafton rooters cheered. Dud, however, took no joy of the doubtful decision. Luck had aided him that time, but this time, he told himself, he would surely fail. And fail he did. The ball passed well inside the plate and the batsman, staggering away from it, dropped his bat and trotted down the path. Corliss was cheering madly now, sensing the fact that the Grafton pitcher was at last weakening. Guy Murtha hurried to the box and told Dud to take his time, to let them hit. Dud muttered agreement, conscious chiefly of disappointment. He had expected Guy to take the ball away from him! What, he wondered almost angrily, was the matter with them? Couldn't they see that he was through? Why did they want to keep him there when he was only making things worse every minute?

None out now and a runner on first. The next batsman didn't wait for a pass but lighted on Dud's first offering and sent it rolling toward third. Dud and Brooks and Winslow all started for it, but it was Bert who scooped it up and pegged it to Ayer, and Bert wasn't set for the throw and the ball went a yard away from the first-baseman. The first runner dashed to third and the next slid into second base. Dud went despairingly back to the mound to face the next ambitious blue-legged youth. A hit meant two more runs for Corliss, he told himself. Surely then they'd let him go out! But the hit didn't come just then. Instead, it was a short fly that left the bat and Nick Blake ran back and got it safely and slammed it home. But the man on third didn't try to score. Then the hit did come, after Dud by some miracle had induced the batsman to swing at two wide balls, and it sped into short center field and two joyful Corliss runners tallied.

Dud looked inquiringly at Murtha and got only a "Never mind that, Baker! Go to it!" Then his eyes sought the bench, and there sat Leddy, hands in pockets, and Gus Weston chatting unconcernedly with Barnes over the score-book, and Mr. Sargent, leaning forward with hands clasped loosely between his knees and his straw hat pulled over his eyes! Dud couldn't understand it at all. Did they want to get beaten? Couldn't they see that he was throw-

ing the game away, that he wasn't any good after all, that he never had been?

"Settle down, Dud!" called Nick Blake. "At a boy! Let's have 'em, old top!"

"One gone!" chanted Captain Murtha. "Let's have the double, fellows!"

Dud turned desperately to his task again. He tried to remember what the fellow facing him now had done before. Struck out, hadn't he? Or was he the chap who had smashed out that double? Well, it was up to Brooks, and Brooks wanted a drop. Dud tried to catch the runner at first and failed twice and then pitched to the plate. The drop was good and the batsman swung at it.

"That's the stuff!" called Brooks cheerfully. "He can't hit 'em, Dud! Right across now. Show him a good one."

A wide and low one followed and then another. Two-and-one now, and Brooks showing three fingers for another drop. Dud tried it and failed and the umpire announced "Ball three!" Corliss shouted and stamped and clapped. Dud had none to waste and he took all the time he wanted for the next. But it slanted away erratically and the batsman tossed his bat behind him and sprang gleefully toward first, while the runner at that station went on to second. Murtha came to the box.

"Look here, Baker, what's the matter with you?

Are you trying to present them with the game? For the love of Mike, put some of them over! Let them hit 'em, I tell you. We'll take care of them!"

"Maybe," muttered Dud, "you'd better let me out, Murtha."

"Let you out? Is that what you're up to? Well, listen, Baker; you're going to stay in here until you get the third man if it takes all the afternoon! So you might as well get busy. You can throw the game away if you want to, but you're going to stay right here, son! Understand that?"

Dud viewed him, astonished. Then he nodded. "All right," he said finally. "I'll do my best."

"That's the talk," responded the captain kindly. "Get a grip on yourself, Baker. You're just as good as you were an hour ago, man! All you've got to do is to think so! Now settle down and make 'em eat out of your hand!"

Dud gave up trying to understand things after that. They meant to keep him at it until he had retired the side. That was the principal thing to think of. He wasn't to look for relief but must earn his own salvation. Well, in that case he knew where he stood, and that was something of a comfort. At least, he wouldn't have to look over toward the bench every few minutes. Either they thought he could hold what he had or they were just keeping him in to punish him. Either way, it

didn't much matter, he decided. All he had to do now was to retire two more batsmen in some way or other. That realization seemed to simplify matters remarkably!

Dud turned and studied the bases. A runner on second and a runner on first. And one out. Why, that wasn't so bad! A double play would end the trouble, or a hit anywhere in the infield would probably account for one. He mustn't let the batsman bunt toward third, though, for that would draw Winslow off his bag. Better give him low ones and try the inner corner. If only he could get his slow ball working again he might squeeze out of the hole he was in.

"Two fingers," said Dud to himself. "But that won't do, Ed. He wants to dump one down toward third." Dud shook his head and Brooks laid three fingers across his mitt. Dud nodded. Yes, a drop was the best. If he could make it go, he added doubtfully to himself. But he did make it go. And the batsman professed intense astonishment when a strike was called. Brooks signaled for the same thing again, and again Dud essayed it, and again he earned the decision, for this time the batter swung viciously at it without, however, any result. Dud breathed easier. With two strikes across he could waste a couple and perhaps fool the batsman with a hook. Brooks showed two fingers and Dud served

a curve waist-high but wide of the plate. Then another, a little closer, but still not tempting. Dud refused two signals and at last got Brooks to show four fingers. Then Dud nodded, glanced behind him to where Murtha and Blake were running the blue-legged youth back to base whenever he tried to steal a start, and wound up. Forward shot his arm and away sped the ball, straight for the plate and fairly high, and around swung the bat and swept through empty air! For the ball had been a slow one and the batter had hit inches ahead of it!

Dud stopped slipping then, brought up with a round turn, in fact! If he could still make that slow ball of his go right he could fool any of them! He wondered what had got into him! Why, he was just as good as ever! What a silly fool he had been to think anything else! They were shouting shrilly and triumphantly over in the corner of the stand and Brooks was grinning all over his round, freckled face. Dud spread his hand in the dust and fondled the ball and waited calmly for the next batsman. He was no longer afraid, no longer doubtful. He had, he told himself exultantly, come back!

Brooks asked for a curve and Dud refused it. A fast, straight ball instead was what the batter saw speed past him. Perhaps, though, he didn't really see it, for it fairly sizzled with the "steam" that Dud put on it. After that a low curve broke badly and

then a second one barely trimmed the outer corner of the rubber, but the batsman swung at the latter and missed it. A foul back of the plate just escaped Brooks and spoiled what Dud had intended for a third strike. Two-and-two now, and the Corliss coachers shouting imploringly for a hit and the runners dancing on their toes, eager to be off. Dud might still waste one if he liked, but his fingers, when the ball came back to him, curved themselves around the ball cunningly in response to the catcher's signal and Dud stepped forward and pitched, and every ounce of speed he had went into that delivery. Straight as an arrow it flashed to the plate, cut it squarely in halves and thumped into Ed Brooks' mitt. The batter never even offered at it and his bat was still at his shoulder when the umpire waved him aside!

Dud, walking across to the bench, heard the cheers of the tiny band of Grafton rooters and smiled a little. Those cheers sounded awfully good to him just then! He had come through and the only desire in his heart now was to be allowed to finish!

And finish he did, and went straight through to the end of the ninth without further punishment. In those four succeeding innings the enemy made just three hits, one of them a two-bagger that netted nothing beyond a journey to second base. Six strike-

outs were added to his credit and he made two assists. And in the meanwhile Grafton sweetened her total with three more runs, so that when Dud ended the game by causing a Corliss pinch hitter to fly out to Boynton in left the score stood 9 to 3.

CHAPTER XXIII

BEN TELLS A SECRET

THE team missed connection at North Taunton coming back and had to kick their heels about the platform there for more than an hour, reaching school finally just before eight, a very tired lot. There was a cold supper awaiting them in the dining-hall, and after that had been demolished few of the fellows had inclination for anything but bed.

Jimmy, who had remained on the bench all the afternoon, was in a particularly pessimistic frame of mind, and Dud's last conscious memory was of Jimmy, pajama-clad, seated on the edge of his bed, muttering dire threats against Star Meyer.

Thursday was a busy day for Dud, with examinations beginning in real earnest. In the corridor of School Hall at noon he was hailed by Roy Dresser. "Say, Baker, Myatt's looking for you. Told me to tell you to drop around to his room if I saw you."

As there was still a half-hour before dinner, Dud turned his steps toward Lothrop and climbed the

flight of slate steps that led to the second corridor. Ben Myatt roomed with Nate Leddy in Number 8, and both occupants of the two-room suite were in when Dud entered. He hadn't seen Myatt for several days and he was surprised to find him stretched out on the couch looking rather pale and fagged.

"Hello, Dud," he said. "Mind if I don't get up? I'm feeling a bit rocky today. Pull up a chair." Dud replied to Leddy's greeting and found a seat. Leddy went on sorting some books at his desk. "Nate," continued Myatt, "has been telling me about your good work yesterday, Dud. I was awfully glad to hear it, son. How's the arm today?"

"Quite all right, thanks. Oh, it's a little stiff, but I guess it will limber up this afternoon."

"Better go easy with it. Nine innings is quite a stretch the first time. You've never gone the full limit before, eh?"

"No, and I thought for a while yesterday that I wasn't going to be able to. I guess Leddy told you what a mess I made of that fifth inning."

Ben nodded. "I wonder," he ruminated, "how many of us have had an upset in that 'fatal fifth.' It seems that the fifth is crucial. Anyway, I've always had a sort of superstition about it. If I can last out the fifth I can go the limit, but almost every game I pitch something happens in that inning. Sometimes it's only a stumble and sometimes it's a regular

fall-down. I dare say you thought it funny Pete didn't pull you out yesterday when you went bad, eh?"

Dud nodded his head. "Yes, I expected him to, and when he didn't I—well, I sort of thought he was keeping me in to—to discipline me. I suppose he was."

"Not exactly. We were talking you over the other evening; I guess it was the night after the Lawrence game; and Pete said he guessed you wouldn't stand a full game this year but that you might next. I told him you could stand it any time if he'd let you do it. 'You put Baker in a game that's on ice,' I said, 'or a game you don't particularly care about winning and let him see himself through. Every pitcher has got to get into trouble once and dig out again before he finds himself. After he has done it once he knows that he can do it and after that he does it.' Pete thought I might be right and Guy said he was certain of it. Great Scott, don't I know? Haven't I been through it? I've stood up there with the crowd yelping and been so scared I couldn't half see the plate! Just had to trust to luck when I let 'em go that they wouldn't fly over the backstop! Don't you feel, now that you've stood the gaff, that you could start out this afternoon and pitch nine innings without getting wobbly?"

"Yes, I think I could," responded Dud cautiously. "But I mightn't. When a fellow's stuff stops breaking right for him and a play goes wrong in the infield and there are a couple on the bases——"

"Right you are," said Leddy. "I know the feeling, Baker. It's the deuce!"

"It sure is," agreed Ben. "But what I'm trying to say is that a chap has got to get good and scared and get over it before he's worth a hang in the box. You had your scare in the Lawrence game, Dud. I could see just how you felt. But they had to pull you out to save the game. You had another one yesterday and they didn't have to pull you out and you found it was up to you to crawl out of the hole all by yourself, and you buckled down and did it. You didn't know it, but if we'd been trimmed thirty to nothing yesterday you'd still been in there pitching 'em over when the game ended! That was Pete's plan from the first. 'If Baker's in shape,' he said to me, 'I'll put him in and let him pitch the whole game.' "

"I'm glad I didn't know it," laughed Dud. "I'd have been frightened stiff if I had!"

"Wouldn't have blamed you a mite," said Nate. "To tell the truth, Baker, when Pete told me on the bench there yesterday that he was going to put you in for the limit I thought he was crazy. I didn't expect you to last more than four innings. I don't

mind telling you now, because it turned out all right and you fooled me beautifully. I apologize. You pitched as nice a game for a rookie as I ever saw in my life, old man, and that's a fact!"

"I wish I could have seen it," said Ben. "Fact is, Dud, I sort of look on you as a pupil, although I never really taught you a thing except a little common sense. You had everything you've got now when I got after you that day in the cage, but——"

"You taught me how to use what I did have," said Dud stoutly. "If it hadn't been for you I'd never have made good a little bit."

"Well, all right. Thanks for the testimonial. What I wanted to see you about today was this. Nate and I talked it over and we decided to put you wise to what's up. Pete probably thinks it's better to keep quiet about it. Anyway, it wouldn't help any to let it get over to Mount Morris. So you keep it to yourself. I'm dished for the rest of the year, Baker. When I was a kid I had a sunstroke. A lot of us were on the beach one beast of a hot day and we were doing stunts and racing and going on the way kids will, you know. Well, I keeled over and was sick for two or three days; had rather a narrow squeak of it, I believe. I've never had any trouble since, though, until Saturday. It was beastly hot that day, and I guess I was feeling sort of punk, anyway. Well, the result was that I had to give up,

and after I got to the Field House I was as sick as a dog and felt like the dickens. Now the Doc says I've got to keep out of the sun all summer. Oh, he says there's no harm in going around if it's just ordinarily warm, but I'm supposed to wear some sort of a ventilated hat or stick a newspaper in it or something. If the day's all right I'll have a try at twirling Saturday, but I'm pretty sure I'll be good for only four or five innings. That means that Nate here will have to finish out. Or Nate may start and I'll go in if it's necessary. Anyhow, there's the second Mount Morris game the next Friday, and, in case they get one away from us, we'll have to play them again the next afternoon. See what I'm getting at, Dud? You've got to take your turn in one of those games, old man. You can't figure it any other way. Gus may get a whack, of course, and if Gus happened to have a good day it would help the situation a lot. For my part, I don't believe we can count on finishing the series this year in two games. Mount Morris is good and she's got a pitching staff that's every bit up to ours. So there it is. Nate will have to pitch part of the Friday game, at least, and if he does he won't be up to twirling again the next day. We want to win the series, naturally, and we've been talking it over. And we decided that it would be the best thing to put you next to what was up and let you get accustomed to the idea. I don't

know how you are that way, Dud, but I know that a good many fellows if they were suddenly called on to go in and pitch in a deciding game with the rival team would have nerves so badly they wouldn't know a drop from a jump."

Dud took a long breath. "Gee!" he said. "Can I do it?"

"Yes, I'm sure you can—after yesterday. Yesterday's experience was just the sort of medicine you needed. Don't you think so yourself?"

"Yes, I do. At least, I don't think I'd ever go to pieces quite so badly again, Ben. But—but pitching against Mount Morris——"

"Pshaw," said Leddy. "Mount Morris isn't so different from Corliss. They play a little better, that's all. The big thing is to just go in and tell yourself, and make yourself *believe*, that you're a heap better than any batsman they can put up. Isn't that so, Ben?"

"Yep, I think it is. Confidence is a big factor in pitching, Dud. And we want you to spend the next week or so accumulating a lot of it. You're not likely to have to work Saturday, although you never can tell what'll happen in a ball game. Anyway, you won't have to work more than an inning or two. I'm pretty sure I can go four and Nate isn't likely to break down under five, I guess. I wish to goodness we had one south-paw in the bunch!"

"Brunswick's a left-hander," offered Dud.

"I know, but he isn't ready yet. I guess he'll come around nicely next year. Well, that's the outlook. Now, if you take my advice, you'll do a little work every day, Dud; not a great deal, but enough to keep silky; and you'll get used to the idea of going into one of those Mount Morris games and doing a lot of pretty pitching. I'm going to get out of here tomorrow and we'll have a try-out, just you and I, Dud. I want to see that cross-fire of yours again. If you can make that good it might be a big asset against some of Mount Morris' right-handed batters. How is your hitting nowadays, Dud?"

"Pretty poor, I'm afraid," replied Dud ruefully.

"Try and brace up with it. You never can tell when a hit will mean a whole lot to your team. And a pitcher that can smash out a safety now and then—especially when it's needed a lot—is pretty useful."

"That's the only thing that got Ben his place," said Leddy dryly.

"It helped a lot, anyway," laughed Ben, "especially when I started in with the second and didn't have much more than my glove. But you try to meet 'em between now and next Friday, Dud. And, by the way, better not let Pete Sargent know that you're on. Maybe he will give you a hint himself in a day or two, but until he does you let him think you don't suspect anything."

But Dud got no hint from the coach that week. The next day, Friday, Ben lugged Dud off to the practice diamond after the teams had gone in and put him through his paces. Dud's round-arm delivery interested him considerably, and Ben had to have a try at it himself, without, however, getting any such result as Dud did.

"I like that," said Ben. "If you can make it a bit more certain, Dud, you'll have a good ball there. I know if you pitched that to me and I didn't know what was coming I'd back out of the box! Let's try it again."

Dud put in every moment at batting that he could find opportunity for. But he didn't seem to make any improvement. He could land on some of Brunswick's offerings fairly well, but Gus Weston or Leddy nearly always got them past him. He wasn't used in the box on Thursday, and had only two innings of work Friday, but his pitching arm was back in shape and he assured himself over and over again that he was quite ready to face Mount Morris or anyone else. Nevertheless, his heart had a way of jumping into his throat sometimes when he suddenly remembered what might happen a week hence! Jimmy wasn't much use to him at that time, for Jimmy was having hard work with examinations and was, besides, much disgruntled over Mr. Sargent's preference for Star Meyer in center field.

Even when, the day after the Corliss game, he dwelt on what he termed Dud's "coup," he was only half-hearted.

"You own the school now, Dud," he proclaimed. "Your middle name is Popularity. Didn't I tell you that if you followed my advice and specialized on pitching a baseball you'd get to be a regular feller? Sure, I did! And you've gone and done it!"

Dud, though, failed to discern any enormous popularity. Of course those who had seen the game were warm in their praise of his work, and those who hadn't been present looked on him a bit more interestedly, but if he had expected to wake up on Thursday and find himself suddenly famous—and, as a matter of fact, he hadn't thought of any such thing—he would have been disappointed. No one patted him on the back and told him how good he was and no one particularly sought the honor of his society. But the Corliss contest had not been a very important one and the school had fully expected to win it, anyway. Real fame was to be garnered only in a game with Mount Morris.

Saturday dawned hot and breathless, with an unclouded sky overhead. There were no examinations that morning and the fellows had nothing to do but look forward to the afternoon's contest with their old rival and speculate on the outcome of it. A few heroic ones played tennis and the canoes were

pretty busy, but the heat made idleness almost a virtue. It was rumored at dinner time that Leddy would start in the box for Grafton and that Myatt would be held in reserve.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FIRST GAME

WHEN, at two o'clock, the invading hordes swept down on Grafton it looked as though Mount Morris Academy had arrived in toto. Of the hundred and eighty-odd students enrolled at the Greenbank school that year, fully a hundred and fifty swarmed over from the station after the arrival of the train. They came in hilarious mood, marching along Crumbie and River Streets four abreast and waving small green megaphones through which they hoped to later roar the enemy into subjection. Green and white, the Mount Morris colors—I am aware that white is not a color, but how else can I put it?—were much in evidence in the shape of pennants and neckties and arm-bands, while a frivolous fox-terrier led the procession, straining at his leash, attired in a green blanket with the school monogram in white. Altogether, that invasion was notable and picturesque, and Grafton, looking on from the windows of Lothrop and Trow or from along the campus fence, cheered approvingly. Mount Morris cheered back

and waved her pennants, turned into School Street and disbanded at the gate. Subsequently those who had acquaintances at Grafton were to be seen climbing stairways, while others wandered around in critical survey of the school buildings.

Add some two hundred Grafton fellows and another hundred sympathizers from the village and roundabout and you'll understand that the seating capacity of Lothrop Field that afternoon was severely taxed. Politely, but not over-eagerly perhaps, Grafton yielded the grandstands to the visitors and townsfolk and found accommodation on the grass. Only a band was lacking to make the occasion complete; and I'm not sure that a band would have had much chance with all that cheering and singing!

The game started at two-thirty, or, to be exact, four minutes after the scheduled time. The sun was pretty hot and what slight breeze crept up now and then from the river did little to mitigate its ardor. Nate Leddy began proceedings by slipping a strike over on the head of the Mount Morris batting list, and the Scarlet-and-Gray cheered what they were pleased to consider a good augury. The enemy retired without reaching first and when the teams changed places it was seen that Mount Morris, instead of putting in her best pitcher, Saylor, was going to use Moulton. Moulton was a left-hander

and Grafton had taken very kindly to his pitching last year in the second game of the series. Saylor was evidently to be saved for use against Myatt.

But it was soon apparent that Moulton had progressed in the gentle art of pitching a baseball since the previous season, for Blake and Winslow both fanned and the best Ordway could do was to fly out to second-baseman. Save that the cheering and singing and coaching were in their enthusiasm sufficient to mark the occasion as one greatly out of the ordinary, no one would have suspected anything unusual from the first few innings of the contest. Both teams played hard but ragged ball, and the rival scorers had to jot down many errors. And yet, since every spectator was thoroughly partisan, those scoreless innings were not without their interest. There were some brilliant plays by both sides: a running, one-hand catch by Left-Fielder Porter of the visitors that deprived Guy Murtha of a two-bagger, a superb throw to second by Gordon of the home talent that cut down a green-legged runner, a double by Blake and Ayer that brought the fourth inning to an inglorious—or glorious, according to whether you sported green or scarlet—ending. And the two pitchers, neither seriously threatened, also deserved laurels. To offset such commendable incidents, however, there was a sickening muff of an easy toss by Murtha at second, the dropping of a foul by Ayer

after he had it nicely in his hands, the booting of a hit by Winslow and a "solid ivory" play by Gordon in the third when he called for a pitch-out and then pegged the ball over first-baseman's head when the runner was half-way to second. And the visitors made quite as many slip-ups and, I think, more displays of bad judgment of the kind that count in results but do not show in the error column.

Leddy met his first batch of trouble in the fifth—the "crucial fifth," as Ben Myatt had called it two days before—when he passed the first man up and allowed the next to hit safely past Winslow. After that he struck out the next two batsmen but couldn't prevent a run coming over when the following greenleg popped a Texas Leaguer behind Winslow. Nick Blake made a valiant effort to get that hit, but the best he could do was to scoop it up and get the man at third. Grafton got men to third and second in her half, but they died there.

That ended the scoring until the seventh, and it was in the seventh that Leddy gave way to Weston in the first half, and that the home team put the game away in the second period. Mount Morris began by getting a scratch hit that put a runner on first. The next man tried to sacrifice, but Leddy threw wild to Blake at second and both runners were safe. A short fly to left field settled in Hobo Ordway's hands and he held the runners. Then Leddy let down and

passed the next batter on four consecutive balls and the bases were all occupied with but one out. Leddy showed nervousness and risked a tally by trying to catch the runner at second. Only quick work by Blake sent the man at third doubling back to that base. With a strike and two balls on the batter, Nate let go of a wild one and, although Gordon managed to partly block it, the enemy scored her second run. Leddy pitched another ball, worked a strike across and finally passed the batter. It was then that Gus Weston, who had been warming up to Brooks for two innings, was hurried to the rescue.

Gus started erratically by pitching three wild ones in a row and then settled down and struck out the green-leg and got a fine salvo of applause from some three hundred anxious Grafton sympathizers. Another five minutes of suspense followed, during which Dud and Jimmy and the other non-combatants sat on the final two inches of the bench and clenched their hands and yelled their heads nearly off. In the end, after the batsman, who happened also to be Mount Morris's captain, had three balls to his credit and two strikes against him and had fouled off exactly five offerings, a screaming fly to center field that Star Meyer caught ended the trouble.

But if it ended Grafton's trouble it only began Mount Morris's, for it was that last of the seventh

that saw the downfall of Moulton, the Green-and-White's second-best twirler. Gordon led off with a sizzling shot to right that the fielder had to take on the bound and was secure on first. Weston went out, second to first. Nick Blake tried the first thing that came his way and bounced it off Moulton's shins, advancing Gordon and arriving at first without question. Winslow came across with a two-base hit to left that sent Gordon home with Grafton's first tally and a minute later Hugh Ordway slammed one down the third-base line, scoring Winslow and putting himself on second.

That was enough for Moulton and he disappeared, a tow-headed youth by the name of Whitten taking his place. Whitten, though, was easy from the first moment and hit followed hit, interspersed by a couple of infield errors, until Grafton had crossed the platter with six runs.

In the eighth Gus Weston almost produced heart disease among the home team supporters by passing the first batsman, hitting the next on the leg and then committing a most apparent balk and moving the runners to third and second. Ben Myatt drew on his glove about that time and moved down the field with Brooks, but Ben's services were not needed, after all, for a weak grounder was pegged home for the first out and Gordon shot the ball to first for the second. A fly to Boynton, which he juggled for one

awful instant and then captured, brought the suspense to an end.

In the Grafton half of the eighth both Winslow and Ordway hit safely, Murtha flied out to center, Ayer got his base on a fielder's choice that failed to catch Winslow at third, and the sacks were again filled and the stage set for a tragedy. But the best Boynton could do was to pop up an infield fly, and it was left to Coach Sargent, assisted—very capably assisted—by one James Townsend Logan, to produce the appropriate climax.

It was Star Meyer's turn at bat, but Star had failed all the afternoon to do more than reach first on one occasion by virtue of a fielder's choice. So Mr. Sargent looked about him for a pinch-hitter. There was, to be sure, Ben Myatt, but Ben was down the field gently tossing the ball to Brooks. Perhaps it was a gleam of eagerness in Jimmy's eyes that decided the coach. At all events, Star Meyer, armed for the struggle, was called back half-way to the plate and it was Jimmy who jumped to his feet, seized a bat at haphazard, possibly afraid that the coach would change his mind if he gave him a chance, and fairly leaped to the plate.

Jimmy got a fine round of applause and a lot of advice as to what to do. It was evident that many of the audience would be satisfied with nothing less than a home-run, but, on the other hand, the advice

he got from the bench and the coachers was to "just tap it, Jimmy!" Jimmy did not so well as the stand demanded and did better than his teammates advised. He smote it. He didn't smite at once, though. He let Whitten put one straight over that looked too low to Jimmy and just right to the umpire, and he let Whitten follow that strike with two deceitful hooks that looked fine at first and then didn't. And then, when Whitten tried to sneak one over again opposite his knee-pads, Jimmy did his smiting. Jimmy got that ball on the one square inch of his bat best calculated to produce results, a square inch located about four inches from the end, and he put all his contempt for Mount Morris and Whitten and, incidentally, Star Meyer, into his swing, and the ball traveled away with a *crack* that was heartening indeed to the three impatient runners, shot over second-baseman's upthrust glove, still ascending, went curving into center field at a place where neither the guardian of that territory nor his left-hand neighbor had any chance of reaching it, and finally dropped to earth to roll joyfully along the sward pursued by two pairs of agitated green legs!

Need I narrate that all Grafton arose as one and shrieked hysterical delight? Or that the bases, filled a scant moment before, were speedily emptied? Or that Jimmy, finding them empty and having his choice of any, decided to annex second and then,

urged on by coachers more capable of judging the demands of the moment, spurned second and set his heart on third—and would have gone tearing home if Guy Murtha himself hadn't seized him forcibly and thrust him back to the bag? Well, perhaps you wouldn't have guessed the latter details, but I fancy you'd have surmised the others. That hit of Jimmy's went down in local history as one of the famous hits of the national pastime. It wasn't that it won the game, for the game was already captured. Had he struck out Grafton would still have been returned the victor that afternoon. But there was something beautifully satisfying about it, one might almost say artistic. The audience was on the *qui vive* for it, the setting was right to the most minute detail and it was made when and where it would do the most good. To be sure, it might have been a home-run and so scored four tallies instead of three, but I maintain—and I am supported by Dud and Nick and Hugh and half the school—that there is nearly always the element of luck in a home-run, whereas Jimmy's three-bagger was a solid, meritorious, honestly-earned hit as soul-satisfying as any homer ever lifted over a fence!

Perhaps you think I am dwelling over-long on the glory of that performance and to the holding up of the game. But as a matter of fact it ended the game there and then to all intents and purposes. To be

sure, Gordon did get to first on a pass, while the cheering was still going on, but nobody cared, any more than they cared a minute later when Gus Weston fanned. Anything that might happen now would be an anti-climax. The audience was satisfied, surfeited. Mount Morris had no fight left in her and went out in one, two, three order in the ninth.

Subsequently there was chaos and noise and the sight of numerous scarlet-and-gray-hosed heroes bobbing about above a sea of joyful faces and open mouths. And Mount Morris trotted subduedly off the field, after returning Grafton's cheer, and was next seen attired in street clothes being borne in hacks to the station, a number of rather tired-looking but still smiling young gentlemen whom Fate had used unkindly. And yet, as they passed Lothrop Hall they tossed a final cheer behind, and there was a grimness and determination in the tone of it that seemed to say: "Make the most of your triumph, Grafton! Our turn comes next!"

CHAPTER XXV

LEFT BEHIND

GRAFTON jubilated and made glad. Nate Leddy spent a sorrowful evening and refused the comfort offered by his roommate. Gus Weston was inclined to be talkative about his share in the victory, but no one took Gus seriously. Of all those who had taken part in the contest, it remained to Jimmy Logan alone to be triumphant. Jimmy triumphed and made no bones about it. I don't mean that he went around throwing his chest out or figuratively crowning himself with laurel and with bay. Oh, not at all. Jimmy was not self-assertive in the least. He only smiled when laudation came his way, and strove to impress others as being firmly of the idea that what he had done had been nothing to speak of, absolutely nothing. Only, now that it had been mentioned, wasn't it a joke on Star Meyer? Star hadn't made a hit in the game and had fielded—well, anyone knew what Star's fielding was like! And then, just when he had a chance to really do something for himself and the team, Pete had yanked him away from the plate. Not, how-

ever, that, in Jimmy's belief, Star *would* have done anything. Probably quite the contrary and otherwise. Star, he reflected compassionately, must be feeling rather cheap, eh?

Jimmy fairly haunted Star's waking hours for the next day or two. No matter where Star went, there also was Jimmy, Jimmy with a sympathetic mien and a sly twinkle in his eye. Star ran across him in corridors, on the Green, on the Campus, on the field, everywhere. And, on Sunday afternoon, trying to find sanctuary in the library, he hid himself behind an atlas of the world in a secluded corner, only to hear a few minutes later the sound of footsteps on the floor and to glance over the top of his book into the sweetly condoling countenance of Jimmy. Star dropped the atlas with a mutter of despair and sought his room.

There were plenty who predicted that Jimmy had ousted Star from center field, and Jimmy himself believed that he had, and yet when Wednesday came around, bringing final examinations to an end and Yarrow High School to the scene, Jimmy again decorated the bench and it was Star who ambled out to center field! And, oh, the chagrin of Jimmy!

There isn't much to tell of that game. Yarrow had been selected because she was not calculated to make hard work for Grafton, and she proved the wisdom of the selection. Brunswick started in the

box for the Scarlet-and-Gray and lasted three innings and a third of the next. Then Dud went to the rescue and stopped the onslaught of the enemy. He was instructed not to exert himself and didn't need to, but, possibly for fear that he might, Gus Weston relieved him in the eighth. Meanwhile Grafton kept her plate clean and scored eight runs on her own account. Except that it kept the players in form and took the place of a game with the second —which team, by the way, was at Greenbank receiving a rather conclusive drubbing from the Mount Morris second nine—that contest might just as well have not been played. Yarrow High was not enough of an opponent to test Grafton's ability in any line. But it served to keep the enthusiasm up, if anything was needed for such a purpose, and gave the Scarlet-and-Gray something to while away the time with. The next day was to be Graduation Day and many fathers and mothers and assorted relatives and friends were already on hand. The Glee and Mandolin and Banjo Clubs discoursed in the Gymnasium that evening and there was a dance afterwards. The dance, however, was not for the baseball players, or, at least, only a few numbers of it, for they were supposed to be tucked in bed at ten o'clock. Let's hope that most of them were. I know, though, that Jimmy wasn't. Jimmy at that particular hour was perched rather precariously on

the footboard of Dud's bed explaining at great length and with a fine flow of language his opinion of Star Meyer and Coach Sargent and Guy Murtha and all others who in any way represented authority in baseball affairs. Jimmy wasn't nearly through when Dud fell asleep.

Graduation Day dawned fair and only mildly hot and went, as many had gone before at Grafton and as many would later. There were the exercises in the hall at eleven, at which some thirty seniors received diplomas and some one hundred and eighty others applauded deafeningly. Several that we know were among the fortunate young gentlemen: Ted Trafford, captain of last fall's football team; Roy Dresser, Guy Murtha, of present fame; Joe Leslie, class president; Gordon Parker, Nate Leddy, Ben Myatt, Neil Ayer, Jack Zanetti, of track and football renown, and some others doubtless. And—I had almost forgotten—Pop Driver! Yes, Pop actually received his diploma at last and bore up very modestly under the acclaim that almost swept the roof from the building!

And there was a royal luncheon in dining-hall at one-thirty, and after that "spreads," as the fellows liked to call them, in various dormitory rooms, and still later, lemonade and sandwiches and cakes set out on a long table in front of Manning. In the evening Forum and Lit held their big debate of the

year, and Lit won hands down, and the admiring fathers and mothers and sisters and aunts and—oh, all the rest of them, clapped and beamed and were extraordinarily proud. And then there were more refreshments and, at last, everyone went home—somewhere.

The exodus began the next morning, but less than half the students deserted. Most of them, accompanied by compliant parents, entrained for Greenbank at eleven-ten or twelve-twenty-five to see the ball game. At a few minutes after twelve Grafton was pretty well deserted. Mr. Crump, the worthy head janitor, remained, I think, and possibly a stray member of the faculty, but Doctor Duncan went and "J. P." went and "Jimmy" Rumford and, oh, just about everyone! And so we might as well go too!

The team, fifteen strong exclusive of manager and assistant manager and Mr. Sargent and "Dinny" Crowley and "Davy" Richards, left on the later train. A five-minute wait at the junction, spent in working off a little extra enthusiasm, and then they boarded the main line train and were hustled away toward Greenbank and whatever fate awaited them.

Of course most everyone hoped for a second victory since it would leave them free to go home for the summer, but there were one or two enthusiasts who were willing to see the series go to three games. Among the latter was Dud, for Dud wanted very

much indeed to pitch in one Mount Morris contest, and he saw no likelihood of doing it unless that third game was played. Most of the fellows proclaimed their belief that Grafton would again take the measure of her opponent this afternoon, but secretly they doubted it. Mount Morris had nearly always taken one game, and today, playing on her own field, surrounded by her graduation crowd, and smarting under the defeat of last week, she was certain to make a fine fight for victory.

Mr. Sargent, Murtha, Barnes and Mr. Crowley occupied seats together and spent most of the time between Needham Junction and Greenbank laying plans for the contest. Dud and Jimmy sat together further back in the coach, Jimmy doing his best to make Star Meyer uncomfortable by staring at the back of his head. There was a good deal of talk and laughter and some horse-play, for the fellows had the coach pretty much to themselves until Webster was reached. There was a delay at Webster, for a branch line train with which the express made connection had not arrived. Most of the fellows disembarked to stretch their legs and harry the station agent, and Jimmy and Dud were of the number. Jimmy insisted on taking his stand on the platform opposite the window at which Star sat and staring him out of countenance until Dud dragged him away by main force.

"I'll bet," chuckled Jimmy as, having promised to behave, he obtained his release from his chum's grasp, "I'll bet that Star will be glad when he hikes out for home! I never knew a fellow who disliked to be looked at as much as he does!"

"Looked at!" said Dud. "You're enough to drive the fellow crazy! I wouldn't be surprised if he dreams of you at night, you and your—er—bacillus stare!"

"I think the word is *basilisk,*" replied Jimmy sweetly. "Not that it matters, however. Not that anything matters except whether I beat that chump out for the position of center fielder today. Say, where are you taking me? Suppose the train starts up?"

"It won't. You heard the trainman say we were waiting for the local, and that comes in over there on the other side of the station. Let's see if there are any fish in this stream."

"Who cares whether there are or not?" But Jimmy followed along the embankment to lean beside Dud over the railing of the culvert and stare into the little brook that flowed beneath. "I see a frog down there, if that will do you any good. I'd like to catch him and put him down Star's neck!"

They had wandered some forty or fifty yards back from the rear car, which the team had taken possession of, and consequently when a bell clanged

far down the track and the command "All abo-o-oard!" reached them, as it did at that moment, they didn't waste time in expressing surprise or consternation but set off as fast as their feet would carry them.

"That trainman," panted Jimmy, "will come to a bad end!"

Whether the conductor failed to see them or whether he gave them credit for an astonishing celerity they never knew, but the train began to move before they had covered half the distance between the culvert and the last platform of the rear car. Running over ties is not conducive to speed and for a moment or two they despaired of reaching their goal. But they did reach it, just when the end of the station platform threatened to defeat their efforts, and Jimmy, leading, grasped a handful of iron railing and gave a spring.

What happened next was always very confused in their minds. They had noticed that the rear platform was occupied by someone, but had not recognized who that someone was. As Jimmy's fingers closed about the railing at the steps a rubber-soled shoe was placed against his chest and the very next thing Jimmy knew he was rolling over on the platform and Dud was rolling over with him, and the train was rods away!

Struggling somehow to his feet, Jimmy gave chase,

shouting like a wild Indian and causing a stupendous commotion amongst the few occupants of the platform. But all he got for his pains was an ironic farewell wave from the figure in the doorway of the last car!

Dud, rather pale of face, joined him, dusting his clothes and staring dazedly after the disappearing express. Jimmy, wild-eyed, turned sputteringly.

"D-did you see who that was?" he demanded. "It was Star Meyer! He pushed me off the step! He—he kicked me off! I might have been killed! You wait! You wait till I——"

But Jimmy was fairly gibbering now. Dud handed his straw hat to him. "Never mind about that now," he said impatiently. "The question is how we're to get to Greenbank. How far is it?"

"I don't know. You wait till I get my hands on that—that——"

"Let's find out," interrupted Dud anxiously. "The game's at two-thirty and it must be half-past one now. Maybe there's another train that will get us there in time, Jimmy."

Jimmy stopped his mouthings and hurried after Dud to the waiting-room, unconscious of the curious regard of the small audience. The agent was most unsympathetic. He had been chivied by the fellows and made sport of and he seemed to think that it served these two young rascals just about

"Jimmy . . . was rolling over on the platform and Dud . . . with him"

right. His replies to their anxious questions were short and discouraging. No, there wasn't another train to Greenbank before two-forty-eight. No, he didn't know how they were to get there by half-past two. (His tone implied that he hoped they wouldn't!) Yes, they might be able to get a carriage to drive them over. There was a livery stable about a mile down the road there. And the distance to Greenbank by rail was nine miles.

They retired to consider. A mile walk to the livery stable didn't appeal to them and Dud suggested telephoning. Fortunately, there was a booth in the corner of the waiting-room and Jimmy possessed a nickel. They crowded in and at last, after much delay, got the stable. But the voice at the other end was not at all reassuring. They had carriages enough and horses enough, but just now there wasn't anyone to drive 'em. If they could wait until two o'clock maybe Billy would be back from Chester. Jimmy impatiently suggested that they could drive themselves and the stable could send a man over to Greenbank on the train to bring the team back. But that didn't appear feasible to the man on the telephone. Mr. Libby, it appeared, had gone to the city. (Mr. Libby, they gathered, was the proprietor.) If Mr. Libby was there maybe he'd let 'em have a rig, but the speaker declined to shoulder the responsibility. In short, the only course was to

await the return of Billy at two—or maybe half-past—or three, at the latest!

Jimmy hung up the receiver impatiently.

"I suppose there isn't a trolley?" murmured Dud. They consulted the agent once more. He showed peevishness at being required to awake from his nap and open the window again and took evident pleasure in informing them that the nearest trolley line was four miles distant and that it didn't go to Greenbank, anyway; leastways, not direct; it went to West Shoreham first. The window descended with a venomous bang.

Dud and Jimmy, hands in pockets, wandered disconsolately back to the platform. There was an unoccupied baggage truck there and they seated themselves on it and swung their legs and stared forlornly at a field of potatoes.

"I dunno," murmured Jimmy hopelessly.

Dud consulted his watch. It was now one-forty-six. In three-quarters of an hour the game would start. And they wouldn't be there! Of course it wasn't very likely that he would have had a chance to pitch today, anyhow, but there was always the possibility. Dud sighed deeply and Jimmy echoed the sigh. It had just occurred to him that there was now no question as to who would play center field.

"If I ever lay my hands on that skunk," broke forth Jimmy, "I'll—I'll just about——"

But Dud interrupted by sliding off the truck and walking away down the platform.

"Where are you going?" called Jimmy.

"I'm going to Greenbank," answered Dud.

"How?"

"Walk!"

"Walk! Walk nine miles? Why it'll take hours!"

"All right," replied Dud over his shoulder. "Let it. But I'm going to get there, just the same, Jimmy."

"But—here, hold on!" Jimmy followed at a trot. "What's the use, Dud? We won't get there until the game's 'most over, and——"

"Can't help it. I started out to see that game and I'm going to! Besides, a fellow might as well be walking as sitting around on that platform. I can do nine miles in two hours, I guess."

"Two hours! Oh, jimminy!" Jimmy looked longingly back at the shaded platform.

"What do you say?" demanded Dud. "Coming along?"

"I suppose so," said Jimmy in a weak voice. "I don't see what good it is, but—all right, Dud, I'll have a try at it. Nine miles! Gee!"

"Come on then," said Dud. "Let's hike."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BORROWED HAND-CAR

IT was hot and the walking was hard. They took to the path between the tracks, but even that was far from being an ideal surface. Now and then a sleeper, longer than the rest, protruded to trip unwary feet and for long stretches at a time they walked over ballast. When they had been on their way only a few minutes a locomotive whistle sounded in the distance behind them and Jimmy was for turning back. It might be, he thought, a train to Greenbank. But Dud destroyed his hope.

"It's that branch line train," he said. "The one we didn't wait for."

"I'd like to push it off the track," muttered Jimmy. "If it hadn't been for that we wouldn't be in this fix."

After another ten minutes conversation ceased altogether. They were too hot and tired for talking. The track, with strange perversity, ran for a long way through a cut and what breeze there was failed to reach them. They watched eagerly for the mile-posts at first, but they were unusually far apart,

they concluded, and they soon got tired of looking for them. A wooden trestle made the going easier while it lasted, for there were planks to walk on, but it ended all too soon and they were back on cinders and broken stone again. Near the end of the third mile they retired to the ditch at one side to let a long freight trundle past. Jimmy morosely observed that, of course, the pesky thing had to be going in the wrong direction!

They reached a small station at about half-past two and made an assault on the water tank in the little room. Perhaps fortunately, the water had not seen any ice that day. They rested a few minutes and then went on again. A hundred yards down the track Jimmy uttered an exclamation and Dud turned to find him pointing dramatically at a hand-car reposing on a couple of ties laid at right angles to the rails at one side of the way.

"What do you know about that?" asked Jimmy in awed tones.

"What about it?" asked Dud.

"Why, you chump, all we've got to do is slide that on the track and get to Greenbank in no time at all!"

"And get arrested for swiping railroad property!"

"We won't swipe it; we'll just borrow it," said the other indignantly.

"I guess," responded Dud dubiously, "it's harder

to work one of those things than it is to walk. Besides, we couldn't lift it onto the rails."

"I'll bet we could. And all you have to do is just work those handles up and down like a pump, you on one side and I on the other. It may be hard, but it'll be a mighty pleasant change!"

"We're certain to get in trouble if we try that, Jimmy. Come on. We've done half the distance, I guess, already."

"Oh, come on!" Jimmy was already struggling with the hand-car. "We can lift it easy enough, Dud. It isn't heavy. Here, we'll toss this junk off." And Jimmy ruthlessly slid a box of spikes and some tools to the ground. "Give us a lift, Dud!"

Dud hesitated an instant longer and then went to Jimmy's assistance. The car was lumbersome, but they had no great difficulty in trundling it along the ties and then swinging it to the rails. Fortunately, a bend in the tracks hid them from the little station.

"Climb aboard!" said Jimmy joyfully. "Bend your back, Dud! Let her flicker!"

She didn't "flicker" much at first, though, and it proved to be surely a case of "bend your back"! They did a good deal of grunting and perspiring before the hand-car found its gait. After that it wasn't hard to keep it going, except that the continual raising and lowering of the bars soon began to tire arms and shoulders and backs. But Jimmy,

although the perspiration was soon trickling down his nose, was full of encouragement.

"There's another mile-post coming, Dud! Say, I'll bet we're making fifteen miles an hour, eh?"

"More like ten," panted Dud. "Wish we'd come to a grade so we could quit a minute!"

"Bound to be one soon, I guess. Keep it up! We're doing finely!"

And there was one soon. It began a few rods beyond, but, instead of being a down-grade it was the other sort, and for the next ten minutes they had their work cut out for them! Dud was all for abandoning the hand-car and taking to their legs again, but Jimmy pointed out that when they had once reached the top of the hill they'd be able to coast down the other side of it. But Jimmy was wrong about that, for when the grade did come to an end only a level track awaited them. Still, after propelling that thing up a quarter-mile rise, even level track was a vast relief, and they let the car run a minute while they dropped the handles and mopped their streaming faces.

"What time is it now?" asked Jimmy, easing a wilted collar about his neck. They had long since removed their jackets and hats and bundled them at their feet.

"Two minutes to three," answered Dud. "How much farther is it, do you think?"

"Only about two miles, I guess. Say, suppose we come to a station? We'll have to beat it by in a hurry, eh?"

"Either that or let this thing go. But there isn't likely to be another station before Greenbank, I guess. Let's hit her up again."

They hit her up and overtook another mile-post and were arguing breathlessly as to the distance they had covered when a sudden roar and clatter down the track behind them put the question out of mind.

"Train!" yelled Dud, who was facing the rear. "Stop her, Jimmy!"

Jimmy threw his body across his ascending bar, after one glance behind him. A short blast of warning came from the approaching locomotive, and then another and another. The hand-car slowed and stopped and before it had ceased its momentum two badly scared boys were on the ground beside it.

"We've got—to get—her off!" cried Dud. "Quick, Jimmy!"

On came the train, still whistling, but now they could hear the grating of brake-shoes as the engineer put on the air. Dud had his end of the hand-car clear of the rails, but at Jimmy's end the wheels were caught.

"Give me a lift—here!" panted Jimmy, and Dud sprang to his aid.

Neither dared look back up the track, but they could feel the rails pulse as the locomotive bore down upon them, while the screech of locked wheels was deafening. It seemed minutes before they managed to wrench the hand-car from the track, although it was in reality but a matter of seconds from the first warning blast to the instant that, pushing the hand-car down the slope beside the railway, the two boys literally threw themselves after it. There was a roar, a maelstrom of dust, the sound of releasing brake-shoes and the freight, gathering speed again, rushed by them.

Clank-clank! Thump-thump! Car after car went past while Dud and Jimmy, white-faced, breathless and trembling from their exertions, crouched in a tangle of bushes beside the half-overturned hand-car, deafened, choked and blinded with dust, shudderingly grateful for their escape.

Meanwhile, some two miles distant, Grafton and Mount Morris were battling valiantly on a sun-smitten diamond before the gaze of nearly a thousand excited spectators. The fourth inning was drawing to its close. It had been a slow contest, filled with anxious moments for both contenders. Every inning so far had seen runners on the bases and yet only one tally had been scored and that for the visitors. In the first of the second a pass had been fol-

lowed by a clean hit and a bad error by Mount Morris' second-baseman and Captain Murtha had dashed over the plate. But since then Saylor, for the Green-and-White, and Nate Leddy, pitching for the visitors, had managed to stave off runs, although more than once a hit would have spelled disaster. Neither Saylor nor Leddy had gone unpunished, for there had been hits aplenty for both teams, but neither Grafton nor Mount Morris had been able to hit safely when a hit would have meant a run. Errors had been frequent and each team had been about equally guilty, although the Green-and-White's slip-ups had proved more costly. Now, with two down and Gordon on second, Nate Leddy was trying his hardest to solve the mysteries of the sharply-breaking deliveries of his rival. Here again a hit would send a tally across, and here again the hit was not forthcoming, for Nate, after getting Saylor in the hole, fouled off his second strike and then lifted a high one to first-baseman.

The fifth began with the tail-end of the Mount Morris batting list coming up and Leddy beginning to show wear. Strike-outs had been few and Nate had in nearly every case been obliged to serve at least seven balls. Mount Morris had displayed a positive passion for knocking fouls. Nate's first two offerings were not good enough and the third went bounding off the batsman's cudgel into the

stand. Then came a third ball, and simultaneous with the umpire's decision Ben Myatt left the bench and began to warm up with Brooks. Nate had to let that batter go. The next one flied out to Boynton. Then came another hit, the seventh for the home team, and first and second were occupied. Nate was slipping now and from the bench Coach Sargent was watching him as a cat watches a mouse. One ball—two balls—a strike—another ball—

Mr. Sargent arose and Guy Murtha hustled in from second to the mound. Back of first base Ben Myatt removed his coat and moved into the field. Nate passed him the ball and Ben clapped the other on the shoulder as he turned toward the bench.

"Myatt pitching for Grafton!" announced the umpire.

Weston had joined Brooks and was tossing the ball to him desultorily, his gaze on the diamond. The cheers from the visiting contingent died away and Ben took up the task. The batsman accepted the first ball and slammed it across the diamond to Nick Blake. Nick dashed to second and made the out, but the oncoming runner from first spoiled his throw and the double. Two down and men on first and third. But Ben had the situation in hand and the next batsman fouled out to Winslow.

Once more Grafton put runners on the bases, Winslow first, after Blake had retired by the strike-

out route, and then Ordway, the latter beating out a bunt by a hair's-breadth. But then Murtha, swinging like a Hercules, only succeeded in driving a liner into shortstop's glove and Neil Ayer's fly to right was an easy out.

Mount Morris' first-batsman struck out amidst the joyful whoops of the Grafton supporters, but the next man hit safely to short left and was advanced by a bunt which Winslow, coming in for on the run, scrambled. A double steal followed, Gordon pegging to Winslow too late. Myatt had trouble finding the plate and the bags were filled again. But Fortune had not yet turned her back on the Scarlet-and-Gray. The Mount Morris left fielder, doing his utmost to bring off a sacrifice fly, only hit a weak, bounding ball to the pitcher's box and the runner was out at the plate. But Gordon's throw to first was too late to get the batter. Myatt worked a strike over and followed it with a ball. Then a healthy swing failed and the score was two-and-one. But a second ball followed and then a third, and Grafton saw trouble ahead. The next was a strike, not offered at, and Ben gathered himself together for a final effort. When the ball left his hand it sped straight for the center of the plate with nothing on it but speed. There was a *crack* of wood against leather and out in left field Hugh Ordway, shading his eyes for an instant, turned and

raced back. A swift turn, a change of direction to the right and then a breathless, silent moment in the stand. Down came the ball, Hugh stepped forward a pace and then a mighty shout of joy and relief arose from the flaunters of the scarlet-and-gray pennants. With his back almost at the wall of the red-brick dormitory, Hobo Ordway had pulled down one of the longest flies in the history of the dual contests!

The seventh began with Grafton still one lone tally to the good. Boynton was an easy out, short-stop to first, Star Meyer fanned, Gordon got a lucky hit that glanced from Saylor's glove and rolled safely past second-baseman. Myatt received a salvo of applause as he made his first appearance at the plate and there were demands for a home-run. But Ben was not the old Ben today. Those on the bench realized that he was playing on his nerve and Mr. Sargent viewed him anxiously. Ben let Saylor put a strike and two balls over before he offered. Then came the hit-and-run signal and he swung at a fairly wide one while Gordon streaked to second. Ben missed entirely, but the catcher's hurried throw was low and Gordon was safe. Ben spoiled the next one and Saylor made it three balls and Grafton howled and whooped expectantly. But Ben's attempt to wallop failed, for the ball only glanced from his stick and rolled slowly toward third. Pitcher and third-

baseman both scurried for it and Saylor fielded it. It was too late to get Gordon and the pitcher pegged across to first. Ben, running hard, scented the throw and dived feet-foremost to base with the result that he collided with the baseman and that youth dropped the ball. Had Gordon started for home at that moment he could have reached it safely, but he didn't and a golden opportunity was lost.

Nick Blake let two go by, one a strike and the other a pitch-out. Then, on the next delivery Myatt sprinted to second unchallenged. Nick tried to hit but failed and found himself in the hole. Saylor coaxed him with a drop and then a wide and high one and Nick refused both. It had to be good then and it was, and Nick let go at it and dashed for first, while Gordon tore in from third and Myatt legged it to third. But Nick's effort was vain, for the Mount Morris third-baseman speared the ball a yard in the air!

The Green-and-White was not yet acknowledging defeat, and proved it by the way she went after the redoubtable Myatt in the last of the seventh. Ben was slow and careful today, lacking his usual certainty and dash, and after the first man at bat had smashed a drive down the first base line for a single the home team batters lost their awe of him and began to make trouble. Ben retired the second man after much trouble by making him fly out to Meyer,

and Meyer held the runner at first by a quick return. But the next man found something to his liking and sped it straight over second and the runner on first went on to third. Ben's trip around the bases had been his undoing and he knew it, and after he had pitched two balls to the succeeding batsman he turned and spoke to Murtha and a consultation followed. Mr. Sargent was already on his feet beside the bench. A nod of his head and Guy Weston tossed the ball to Brooks and walked toward the mound.

Ben came out with hanging head and staggered when he reached the bench, and Davy Richards, a supporting arm around him, led him off to the dressing-room.

Weston sped in his warming-up deliveries and then faced his task. A man on first and one on third, one down and two balls on the batsman was the situation, and Weston didn't better it any by pitching two balls in succession and adding a third runner to the bases! On the bench, Mr. Sargent watched dismally. Brunswick, his last chance now, was warming up, but it was a question whether Brunswick could do any better than Weston. Mr. Sargent was thinking hard things of Dudley Baker at that moment!

And consequently it was something of a surprise to him when Dud's voice came to him across his shoulder! "I'm terribly sorry, sir," Dud was say-

ing breathlessly, "but we got left at that place where we stopped, Logan and I, and we walked most of the way and stole a hand-car, sir, and we just got here."

Mr. Sargent's surprise turned to cold disapproval. "Very nice, Baker," he replied scathingly. "It may comfort you to know that you've probably lost the game for us. I had meant you to pitch today, but——"

"Yes, sir, thanks, and I'm all ready to if you'll let me!"

"All ready to!" Mr. Sargent surveyed the boy's disheveled attire and flushed, tired face sarcastically. "You look it! Why, you couldn't find the plate in the condition you are!"

"You try me, sir! I'll be all right in three minutes, sir! Just let me get into my togs, Mr. Sargent, and give me a chance! Will you, sir, please?"

Weston had just served another ball to the new batsman. Mr. Sargent hesitated only an instant. Then: "I'll give you a chance, Baker," he said quickly. "Hurry into your togs. Churchill, show Baker where to change. I'll hold the game up as much as I can. But hurry!"

"Yes, sir, I won't be three minutes! And Jimmy, sir? Logan, I mean. May he——"

"Yes, yes, only don't stand here! Hurry, I say."

Mr. Sargent sped Parker to where Brunswick

was warming up and in a moment Brunswick was listening to the coach's instructions. In the box, Gus Weston, ball in hand, waited uncomprehendingly. Then Murtha took the sphere from him, slapped him on the shoulder and sent him disgustedly to the bench.

"Brunswick pitching for Grafton!" called the umpire.

But Brunswick's pitching was an extraordinary affair! If cold molasses is slow, then Brunswick was molasses frozen to a state of solidity! It took him the better part of sixty seconds to get from bench to mound, and once there he had to talk long and earnestly with Murtha and Winslow. And then he went at his warming up very, very slowly, with a wait between each delivery. Mount Morris protested volubly and the stand hooted, but Brunswick was not concerned. Before each delivery he examined the ball rather as though he had never seen anything just like it before, and then, having assured himself that it was all right, he studied the plate and the catcher, and some time later he pitched. Just how long it took him to send those five practice balls to Pete Gordon I don't know, but I'm certain that he established a record that afternoon for dawdling! And, finally, just as he had pulled his cap down for the twentieth time and the batsman was impatiently pawing the dirt and waving his bat, an

interruption occurred. A brand-new scarlet-legged player appeared on the scene and walked toward the box. Brunswick dropped the ball and turned away and Mount Morris found the mystery explained. Gordon was yielding his mask and protector to Ed Brooks and the umpire, removing his own mask, stepped again in front of the plate.

"For Grafton," he announced, "Baker pitching, Brooks catching! *Play ball!*"

CHAPTER XXVII

WINNING HIS GAME

BASES filled and only one out! Two balls and no strikes on the batsman! A hit meant two runs across! All this Guy Murtha explained in quick, troubled words to Dud. And Dud, tired of face but eager-eyed, nodded quite as though Guy had explained that it was a fine day and that the weather prediction was for a continuation of present conditions!

Then Guy went back to his place and the Grafton sympathizers stopped cheering and Dud sped his five balls to Brooks, each one just where he meant it to go.

Once more the batsman took his place and Dud pitched.

"Str-r-ike!" bawled the umpire, and waved an arm aloft. The batter thumped the rubber with his bat. Again Dud launched the ball forward. Again it sped straight and true across the platter and knee-high.

"Str-r-ike two!"

The batsman grew wary. He no longer fidgeted

but put his whole mind on the next delivery. Dud fumbled his cap, took his half wind-up and shot his arm to the right and around in a swing. The ball flashed to the plate and the umpire hurled his hand aloft with a mighty gesture.

"He's out!"

Strident protest from the retreating batsman and from the Mount Morris bench! Cheers wild and triumphant from the Grafton seats and from the field! And another green-stockinged player faced his fate. A ball, a strike, another ball. Then a drop that was swung at and never touched. Two-and-two, and Mount Morris watching her opportunity slip from her grasp. Then, while Dud swung his arm up, came a quick cry from behind him:

"He's off!"

The man at third was streaking to the plate! But so was the ball, and although the batsman swung at it, it lodged safely in Brooks' mitt and Brooks, dropping to his knees, blocked the ambitious runner a foot from the plate!

"Can you keep it up?" asked Mr. Sargent wonderingly as Dud sank to the bench and Davy Richards flourished a towel in front of his face.

"I think so, sir. I'm going to try awfully hard," answered Dud.

"Well, go easy on yourself this inning. Let them

hit a little if you like. There's another inning coming and maybe several."

"Yes, sir." Dud's gaze, straying along the bench, caught sight of Jimmy, Jimmy dressed for play and with an anxious regard fixed on the coach. "If you could, sir," said Dud, "I wish you'd let Logan in. It wasn't our fault that we got left, sir; at least, not wholly; and Jimmy's crazy to play!"

"Logan? Maybe in the next inning. I'll see. Here! What's this?"

This was Star Meyer picking himself up from the water bucket, having in some way tripped over one of Jimmy's feet as he passed. Jimmy was all sympathy and apologies, but Star only muttered. His haughtiness was wholly lacking and the fellows viewed with real concern the almost abject manner with which he righted the empty pail and retired into the far end of the bench. But Jimmy, catching Dud's eye, winked wickedly.

The eighth passed into history without witnessing a run for either side. Grafton got Ordway to first on a pass and he went on a base when Ayer lifted one to left for the second out. Then, while Boynton was at bat, Hugh was caught napping at second and another chance to score passed into oblivion.

Mount Morris' first man got a hit and was thrown out at second on an attempted steal, Brooks making as pretty a peg to Murtha as one could hope to see.

The next man struck out miserably. Then followed a scratch hit that came near to being an error for Blake. The next man, Saylor, flied out to Murtha and ended the eighth.

Boynton started for Grafton in the ninth by beating out a weak hit and the scarlet pennants waved again. Meyer, bat on shoulder and stepping to the plate, was recalled.

"Logan batting for Boynton!" called the umpire.

Jimmy swung at the first ball, disdained the next two, had a second strike called on him, started for the next and changed his mind and was glad of it and was finally passed when what Saylor had meant for a strike over the inner corner went wrong. With two on bases, Brooks was the man of the hour, but Brooks was no hitter and only stood there while Saylor fooled him on two slow ones that went for strikes, wasted a wide one on him and then made him bite at a drop that actually dusted the plate. Although Brooks played the game to the last and sped for his base the ball was recovered by the catcher and got there well ahead of him.

Dud had as much hope of hitting safely as he had of knocking out a home-run. And he knew very well that he would be doing only what was expected of him if he struck out as badly as Brooks. But he wanted very much to do something a little better than that. As he dug his toes and faced Saylor, he

recalled Ben Myatt's remark that a pitcher who could hit was pretty useful. And Dud wanted to make himself just that! And so he tried as hard as he knew how to keep his eyes on the pitcher and study him and then on the ball, and study that, and so see if—

"One ball!" said the umpire.

Dud took a breath. All right so far. It had been too high and he had known it. He wondered if Saylor would try it again or—

"Str-r-r-ike!"

Well, that had certainly fooled him! He thought surely it was going wide. Saylor had some curve on that one! Dud glued his eyes to the ball once more, swung and missed.

"Str-r-rike two!"

That was awful! He was as good as gone now! Unless—

"Two balls!"

Perhaps Saylor would miss it this time. Then it would be three balls and two strikes and Saylor would have to pitch! Just why Dud offered at the next delivery he didn't know then and couldn't have explained later. It had all the ear-marks of a fast one on the outside of the plate, but for some reason Dud let go at it, and the ball, curving inward, met his bat fairly and screeched off into short center, low enough to have been speared by second-baseman had

he been two yards nearer its path and long enough to send Boynton and Jimmy hustling home. Jimmy beat out that throw by inches only, but beat it nevertheless, while Dud, seeing his chance, streaked to second. And Grafton went fairly delirious with joy!

Nick hit safely and advanced Dud, Winslow fouled out to the catcher and Hugh Ordway, putting all his strength into a terrific swing, sent a screeching fly far into right field but not far enough to be out of reach of the guardian of that territory. A long hard run and a brilliant catch and the half-inning was over.

Mount Morris tried hard enough in that last period to catch up, but she had little chance. Dud had no trouble in striking out the first batsman. The next hit safely through second base territory. The third went out, Winslow to Ayer, and the fourth, Mount Morris' last hope, swung at a high one, was fooled by a drop that he didn't like and that was labeled a strike, fouled off another and at last, just as the shadow of the grandstand had reached the edge of the plate, slammed a straight, fast one directly at the pitcher's box. Dud couldn't make the catch; it was going too hard for that; but he knocked it down, found it leisurely enough and tossed to Ayer. And as the big first-baseman nestled the ball in his glove the stands flowed onto the field and the game was over!

Half an hour later, tired and very, very happy, Grafton was returning home. Dud, hero of the hour, but a very retiring, modest—even uncomfortable—hero, was wedged between Jimmy and a car window. There was much talk, much laughter, much noise, and James Townsend Logan was accountable for fully his share of it. Jimmy had just finished recounting the history of their hand-car adventure and the subsequent heart-breaking hike to Greenbank to as many fellows as could cluster within hearing. Blake, sitting on the arm of the seat, one hand fondling Jimmy's damp locks, put a question.

"Where," he asked, "is Star now, Jimmy?"

Jimmy grinned, felt carefully of a large lump under his left eye and made answer solemnly.

"He's coming by the next train. He was—er—delayed."

"I hope," said Nick gently, "that you didn't—didn't damage him, Jimmy."

Jimmy turned and smiled broadly up at the questioner.

"You wait till you see him!" he said in a deep, ecstatic whisper.

Mr. Crowley, pushing his way along the aisle, paused to thrust a hand over Jimmy's shoulder.

"Baker, that was playing ball, my boy," he said happily. "Shake hands! You pitched a fine three

innings and, what's more, you won your own game, boy!"

Dud murmured his thanks, aware of the kindly smiling looks from the clustered faces, and turned his own face to the window. It occurred to him just then that Mr. Crowley's expression was capable of two meanings. Yes, he told himself contentedly, he had at last won his game!

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